LIFESTYLE / C1

What happens when love is gone; 2bU explores the breakup issue

ACROSS / A18

Guimaras execs ask GMA for release of P800M for rehab, livelihood in oil-spill affected areas

NEWS / A2

PSG to file charges vs car driver who tried to overtake GMA convoy on Edsa

METRO / A21

Garbage truck rams house, kills family of 4 in Rodriguez, Rizal

KL religious police zero in on 'immoral couples'

INGAT KAYO SA MGA JANITOR DYAN!

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—Religious police in a Malaysian state plan to deploy spies working as waiters or janitors in hotels to stop activities the authorities consider im-

KL RELIGIOUS/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, February 21, 2007 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 75 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

Ash Wednesday: Life is only so many heartbeats

By Ceres P. Doyo

COMMENTARY

IN THIS VALENTINE MONTH AND SEASON OF hearts, it behooves us to realize that each person has only a certain number of heartbeats in his or her lifetime. A handful of dust and ashes is what our human body will be reduced to eventually—to rise again as new life.

ASH WEDNESDAY/ A15

For Noynoy sake, Kris to advance baby's birth

By Norman Bordadora

TV HOST KRIS AQUINO YESTERDAY said she would campaign exclusively for her brother, Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, who is running for senator. *(Related story on Page A16.)*

Kris said she had even decided to move the date of her baby's birth to make sure that the Aquino family would focus on Noynoy come Election Day.

"I was originally scheduled to give birth on May 13 because I'd be giving birth via caesarean section," Kris said

FOR NOYNOY/ A10

RAFFY LERMA

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF KRIS comes news from the stork during the LP proclamation of her brother Noynoy (left) and Sen. Kiko Pangilinan (right with daughter Frankie). Cory Aquino gives all-out support.

Vilma: 80% sure of running for gov

By Tonette Orejas,
Inquirer Central Luzon
and Bayani San Diego Jr., *in Manila*

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—IT'S DEFINITELY a bigger role for the "Star for all Seasons."

Sen. Ralph Recto yesterday confirmed that his wife, Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos, would run for governor of Batangas in the May elections.

"She will be the next governor of Batangas," Recto said at the campaign rally here of the 12 senatorial candidates

VILMA/ A8

NINA CATHERINE CALLEJA

MAYOR VI: A knack for winning awards, elections

Pampanga GMA dilemma

Both warring Pinedas and Lapids are Ms Arroyo's staunch allies

By Michael Lim Ubac

LUBAO, PAMPANGA—After a rousing start on the campaign trail over the weekend, Team Unity yesterday hit a bump on the road as it plowed into the vote-rich but divided bailwick of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Careful not to antagonize administration supporters, Team Unity senatorial candidates, along with the President, went hopping from one political event to another, which were organized separately by Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid and his rival Lilia Pineda, wife of suspected jueteng lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda.

The two staunch allies of Ms Arroyo are gunning for the province's gubernatorial seat.

Neither got the President's endorsement although both are members of parties belonging to the administration coalition.

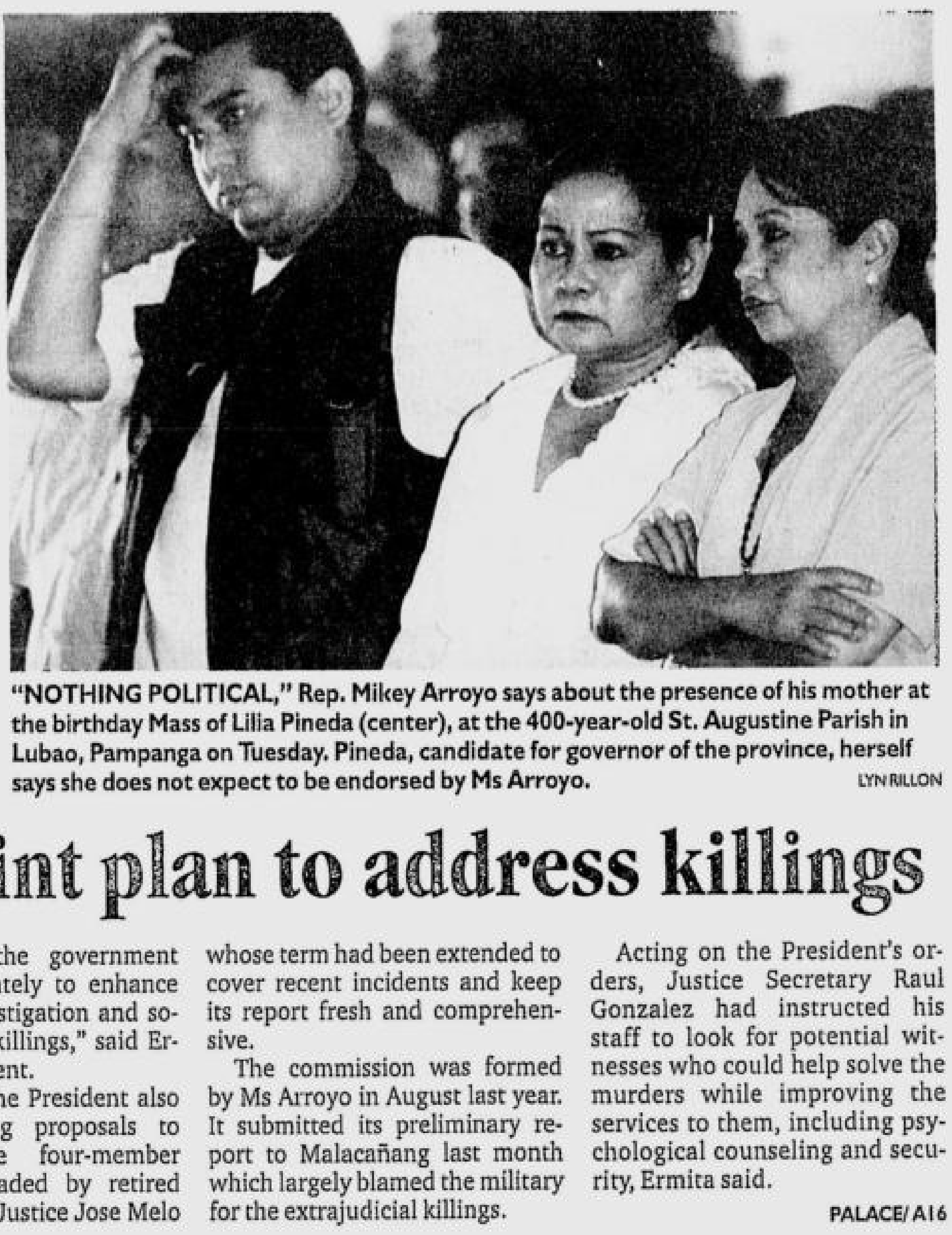
The tension-filled day started with a Mass at the St. Augustine Cathedral here to celebrate the 56th birthday of Pineda. *(See interview with Pineda on Page A10.)*

The President then had breakfast with Pineda and her son,

PAMPANGA/ A10

ENTIRELY POLITICAL: At the kick-off rally of Team Unity Senate bets, reelectionist Pampanga Gov. Mark Lapid (right) and his father Sen. Lito Lapid hold court at the Pampanga Convention Center. Pineda was not invited. The younger Lapid has been endorsed by the administration coalition.

LYN RILLON



"NOTHING POLITICAL," Rep. Mikey Arroyo says about the presence of his mother at the birthday Mass of Lilia Pineda (center), at the 400-year-old St. Augustine Parish in Lubao, Pampanga on Tuesday. Pineda, candidate for governor of the province, herself says she does not expect to be endorsed by Ms Arroyo.

LYN RILLON

Palace comes up with 6-point plan to address killings

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FACED WITH CRITICISM THAT IT was tolerating the killings of activists and journalists, Malacañang yesterday said it had made significant progress in its six-point action plan to put to rest doubts about its sincerity and political will in resolving the murders.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the recent announcement by the Supreme Court that it would create special courts to solve these killings was part of the recommendations made by the President to Chief Justice Reynato Puno last Jan. 31.

"With so much focus on the issue, it is unfortunate not many people know the government moved immediately to enhance further the investigation and solution of these killings," said Ermita in a statement.

Ermita said the President also was considering proposals to strengthen the four-member commission headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo whose term had been extended to cover recent incidents and keep its report fresh and comprehensive.

The commission was formed by Ms Arroyo in August last year. It submitted its preliminary report to Malacañang last month which largely blamed the military for the extrajudicial killings.

Acting on the President's orders, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had instructed his staff to look for potential witnesses who could help solve the murders while improving the services to them, including psychological counseling and security, Ermita said.

PALACE/ A16

One-legged goalie winner in game of life

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A LOT OF TIMES ON THE PITCH, WHEN Joseph del Gallego is faced with a rushing striker, he knows exactly what's on his opponent's mind.

"Some of them are very eager to score against me," Del Gallego told the INQUIRER. "And some of them plan very well by making me go outside the goal."

As harsh as the reason may be, it's easy to understand why opponents think they can have their way with Del Gallego:

The 28-year-old call center manager, who tends the goal for PeopleSupport Team A in Cebu City, plays with just one leg. He lost his left leg to bone cancer 11 years ago.

But he doesn't complain every time opponents try to take advantage of him during games.

"They don't treat me as anybody different," said Del Gallego. He savors the thought that nobody looks down on him whether he is guarding goals in pick-up soccer games on the street or in serious

ONE-LEGGED/ A8

BONE CANCER SURVIVOR Joseph del Gallego is a goalkeeper of PeopleSupport, a call center team. He has also inspired his two sons to take up the sport.

JUNJIE MENDOZA/CDN PHOTO

UN prober 'grills' leftist solons on pork

By Christian V. Esguerra

LEFTWING LAWMAKERS YESTERDAY told visiting UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston that their groups were not fronts for communist organizations but suggested that guerrillas also were involved in extrajudicial killings largely blamed on the military.

In a dialogue with the House Committee on Human Rights, Alston sought a response from representatives of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela to charges by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales that they have abused the "democratic space" while continuing to support the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army. *(See related story on Page A19.)*

"I would like a very specific response, as detailed as possible ... (to) the allegation that you have clear links to the CPP-NPA, the allegation that you have used some of your congressional allowance to provide material support to the rebel organizations," Alston said during the nearly two-hour meeting at the Batasan Complex.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo told Alston, who is here on a fact-finding mission to look into reports of extrajudicial killings, that Gonzales has not provided an "iota of evidence" to support his allegation.

He said the closest that the government got to a proof was the idea that projects funded by the party-list organizations—school buildings, farm-to-market roads, multi-purpose buildings, for instance—could be found in areas "influenced" by the CPP-NPA.

UN PROBER/ A11

EZ2 10 7
SIX DIGIT 5 5 1 8 2 6
SUERTRES
Mid-Day 4 1 1
Evening 1 1 7
(All in exact order)
6/42 LUZON/VIS-MIN
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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Central and Southern Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/02/20/07 SOURCE PAGASA

'Strike while the iron is hot'

GMA says antiterrror law will sustain momentum vs Abu Sayyaf

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO YESTERDAY urged Congress "to strike while the iron is hot" and send the approved antiterrorism bill to her so she can sign it into law "so that we can have uninterrupted momentum in our fight against terror."

"I urge our Congress on as I extol our troops who are in the thick of this fight to finish off the Abu Sayyaf and keep our national perimeters clear of terror," she said in a speech before the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines.

With the antiterror law, the President said the government now had "all the legal teeth we need to curtail the clandestine movement of funds, materiel and persons who are out to sow evil."

In a special session, the House of Representatives late Monday approved a watered-down version of the Human Security Act passed by the Senate two weeks ago. The President must now sign it into law.

The United States and other Western countries have been pushing the Philippines to enact an antiterrorism law for years, citing the presence of militants operating freely in the country's southern islands.

It is the first legislation to specifically address terrorist offenses, defining terrorism as a criminal act that "causes widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace."

It grants authorities access to bank accounts they believe are being used to launder money for terror outfits.

It also reiterates the right of security forces to detain suspects without charge for three days, a provision already on the Philippines' law books. Security forces had asked that the detention period be increased to one month.

Rights abuse

The maximum punishment for terror offenses was set at 40 years in prison.

Human rights activists and some legislators stalled the bill, citing concerns over the possibility that the legislation could lead to rights abuses.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said amendments introduced by opposition legislators had weakened its purpose.

"This is not a bill against terrorism. It is a bill against the military and the enforcers (fighting) against terrorism," he said in a television interview.

Armed Forces Chief Gen. Hermogenes Esperon acknowledged that the bill was far short of the antiterror laws in other countries but said it was still "an excellent start" than not having one at all.

In a bid to allay fears about rights violations, lawmakers included a clause in the bill that grants compensation of up to P500,000 a day for people wrongfully detained.

But even in its watered-down state, the bill still failed to please critics who questioned its legality, saying its definition was too broad and could include legitimate dissent.

The triumvirate of Bishops Antonio Tobias, Deogracias Iñiguez, and Julio Labayen, in a press conference yesterday, described the bill as "whimsical, capricious, despotic and tyrannical."

"We ask the people to be very critical and not to vote for those who supported this newly adopted law," said Bishop Antonio Tobias, reading from a statement prepared by the Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya.

The bishops said the antiterror bill "is directed against the people who are working for political, social and economic changes in the country."

Lawyer Lorna Kapunan, who spoke at the press conference, said civil society groups "should not delay a minute more" in questioning the constitutionality of the law before the Supreme Court.

But lawyer Harry Roque has observed that there must be a prior application of the law before it can be challenged.

"There's the issue of standing. There must be a right that is being violated," he said.

"At the very minimum, there has to be an arrest made under the antiterror bill before you can question it," Roque said. *With a report from DJ Yap and AFP*

Mike A sues Inquirer for libel anew

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FIRST GENTLEMAN JOSE MIGUEL ARROYO yesterday hit back at the Philippine Daily Inquirer with an P11 million libel suit for an article published nearly a year ago which claimed that he flew to Mindanao to bribe election officials to manipulate the 2004 election results.

Arroyo filed the libel case against the INQUIRER before the Manila City Prosecutor's Office around 1:40 p.m. yesterday. He was accompanied by his three lawyers.

"I have suffered serious emotional trauma, mental anguish, serious anxiety, public embarrassment," Arroyo said. "It caused serious dishonor to my person and family."

Named respondents were INQUIRER reporter Fe Zamora, publisher Isagani Yambot, editor-in-chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc, managing editor Jose Ma. Nolasco, associate editors Abelardo Ulanday and Rosario Garcellano and news editor Artemio Engracia Jr.

Arroyo has filed several libel cases against 43 journalists from various publications, including 10 columnists, editors and writers of the Inquirer. The two previous libel cases he filed against the Inquirer arose from columns written by Ramon Tulfo.

Arroyo said the respondents acted with actual malice, intended to "malign and cause irreparable damage" to him. They also acted with reckless disregard of whether or not their accusations were true, and should be held liable for P10M in damages, and P1M for legal expenses, he added.

In a statement released by Malacañang, Arroyo said he decided to file a libel suit because the INQUIRER did not get his side the first time the article appeared and that the paper even disputed his denials in a follow-up article.

Marines' story

The article, "Mike A didn't go to Marawi? Tell that to the Marines" by Fe Zamora which appeared on the front page of the INQUIRER on March 2, 2006, related how Marine soldiers in Campo Ranao, Marawi City reacted hysterically to denials made by Arroyo's lawyer in a television interview that the First Gentleman was never there during the 2004 elections to buy votes.

The Marines' former commander, Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, had testified in Congress in October 2005 that Arroyo flew to the Marawi camp carrying bags containing P500 million which he allegedly used to bribe election officials.

"I vehemently deny that I ever went to Marawi for the purpose of buying votes or to manipulate the (2004) elections in any way. I deny having brought P500 million anywhere for any purpose. I deny having requested anyone, much less any member of the military, to manipulate the election," Arroyo said.

He said the INQUIRER story was "concocted and fabricated."

Arroyo claimed the INQUIRER did not bother to get his side before coming out with the story even though he had made "repeated pronouncements that he entertains verificatory inquiries from the press." *With a report from Allison W. Lopez*

PSG files case vs Edsa 'racer'

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY Group has filed charges against the driver who tried to overtake the convoy of President Macapagal-Arroyo on Edsa on Monday night, which caused one of the escort vehicles to overturn, injuring two PSG officers.

PSG chief Col. Romeo Prestoza said the PSG filed a case for reckless imprudence resulting in physical injury and damage to public property before the Mandaluyong court against Archibald Yap Ang, 25, the driver of a Honda Jazz vehicle.

The President and the rest of her convoy proceeded safely to Malacañang after the incident.

According to Prestoza, Ang and his female companion were unscathed, but two PSG officers riding in the overturned Nissan Safari were injured.

Master Sgt. Zaldy Novicio suffered only bruises but Staff Sgt. Antonio Liban who incurred a head wound was still confined at the PSG station hospital as of press time yesterday.

The presidential convoy was traveling along Edsa en route to Makati at about 8 p.m. on Monday night when Ang's car raced to overtake it.

Prestoza said Ang ignored the PSG's signals to stay away from the convoy, continuing to step on the gas even when the Safari escort had already blocked his car's way.

"We stuck with the proper security procedures, we did not overreact. We have to keep other vehicles far away from the primary vehicle as much as possible because we do not know if a vehicle would be a threat to the President," said Prestoza.

"He [Ang] came from the back so we had to take precautions and block his way," the PSG chief said.

When Ang was finally stopped near the Victor Potenciano Hospital, he explained that he was in a hurry.

Ang, who was detained at the Mandaluyong police station right after the incident, was ordered released by the Mandaluyong city fiscal at about 5:30 p.m. yesterday pending a preliminary investigation. *With reports from Lira D. Fernandez, Inquirer.net, and Santi Alcantara*

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Economic recovery wasn't easy, says GMA

SHE CROWED about the country's rosy economic data under her watch, but President Macapagal-Arroyo admitted it has not been easy.

The President made this admission to the country's business reporters in the face of criticisms that 24 quarters or six years of uninterrupted economic growth have not been enough to uplift the lives of poor Filipinos.

"Reforming the economy is one of the most difficult tasks any administration can undertake, especially in the Philippines. It's very difficult to manage the Philippine economy," said President Arroyo in a speech before members of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines.

"From the start, we set a course to reform the fundamentals of our economy. The seas were often rough, and the wind as in our face. The wind is often in our face but we sailed on because the choices were stark: Sail against the wind and change our economic fortunes, or perish."

"It's not easy to raise revenue by raising taxes and making people angry. But it's necessary if we are to invest new money in vital infrastructure."

Superferry stalls off Negros, is towed

By Riza T. Olchondra and Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

A PASSENGER FERRY WITH 641 people on board stalled off Negros Island after encountering engine trouble, stranding its 517 passengers and 124 crew members.

The Superferry 9, owned by Aboitiz Transport Systems, was en route from Bacolod to Iligan City when its engines shut down eight nautical miles off Daog Point, west of Negros Island at about 2 a.m. yesterday.

"Normally the engine shuts down when there is engine trouble. This is a safety mechanism," said Jess Supan, ATS vice president for security, safety and compliance.

Supan said they have dispatched Superferry 1 to tow the stricken vessel to Iloilo City. The Philippine Coast Guard Vessel is also assisting in the towing operations, he added.

"Our priority now is the safety and convenience of the passengers as the towing operations is underway," he said.

All 517 passengers, 492 adults and 25 minors, are safe and are being attended to by the 124 crewmembers, Supan told INQUIRER.

"A replacement vessel will arrive in Iloilo today to bring the passengers of the troubled Superferry 9 to their destination," ATS said in an advisory.

Supan said that the arrival of Superferry 1, which was en route from Zamboanga, Cotabato to Iloilo, would be delayed because it had to tow the Superferry 9. It was scheduled to dock at Iloilo at 10 a.m. Tuesday, he said.

Both Superferry 1 and 9 are scheduled to arrive at Iloilo at 6 a.m. today.

The Aboitiz management apologized to all passengers for the delay.

The incident came two weeks after another Aboitiz ferry, Our Lady of Medjugorje, stalled on its way from Manila to Coron, Palawan with 958 passengers and crew after its lube oil pump broke.

The PCG search and rescue ship BRP Pampanga helped the passengers after 20 hours while the Medjugorje drifted towards the South China Sea.

Another Aboitiz-owned, Superferry 16, towed the Medjugorje to the Manila pier. *With AP report*

Comelec reminds bets on drug tests

THE COMMISSION on Elections (Comelec) has reminded all candidates running in the May 14 polls to submit their drug test certifications or face disqualification.

The candidates, including party list nominees, have until March 29 to comply with the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

"Our attention was called [because] many of those senatorial candidates did not attach to their certificates of candidacies [proof] of having undergone the drug tests," Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said in a press conference yesterday.

A check with the Comelec legal department showed that of the 80 people seeking a Senate seat and who filed their COCs, only nine had attached certificates that they underwent drug testing.

They were Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri, former presidential chief of staff Mike Defensor, Sen. Ralph Recto and Zambales Gov. Vic Magsaysay of the administration Team Unity; Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano and former senators Nikki Coseteng and John Osmeña, of the Genuine Opposition ticket; and independent candidates, Senators Francis Pangilinan and Manny Villar.

No exemption

"We are reminding [the other candidates] to do so, otherwise their certificates of candidacies may not be given due course. They will be disqualified. Under the law, they all have to file," Abalos stressed.

The Comelec chair expressed confidence that the lawmakers of the Dangerous Drugs Act would not ignore the law that they themselves enacted.

The Comelec en banc promulgated Resolution No. 7822 last Feb. 13, citing Republic Act No. 9165 which provides: "All candidates for public office whether appointed or elected both in the national and local government shall undergo mandatory drug test."

"By requiring candidates to undergo mandatory drug test, the public will know the quality of candidates they are electing and they will be assured that only those who can serve with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency would be elected to hold public office," the Comelec said in the resolution.

Candidates can have the mandatory drug test done in government forensic laboratories or any drug testing center laboratory.

The resolution also directed the Comelec law department to prepare a list of senatorial candidates who complied with the mandatory drug test and another list of those who did not.

The list would be released on or before April 11.

It also directed the provincial election supervisors and city/municipal election officers to submit to the law department a list of local candidates who complied with the mandatory drug test and another list of those who failed to do so. *Nikko Dizon*

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D-MAX	4x4 A/T LX	1,295,000	194,250	11,260	35,073
	4x4 M/T LX	1,240,000	186,000	10,703	35,107
	2008 4x2 LS M/T	935,000	140,250	9,814	
	2008 4x2 LS A/T	1,055,000	158,250	++10,430	
	2008 4x2 LX M/T	915,000	137,250	8,505	25,417
	2008 4x2 LX A/T	990,000	148,500	9,355	
ALTERRA 07	4x4 A/T	1,650,000	250,200	18,930	
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SC upholds award of P952-M road contract in Catanduanes

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE SUPREME COURT HAS UPHELD the awarding of a P952 million contract to China Road and Bridge Corp. which won the bidding conducted by the Department of Public Works and Highways for the construction of a Japanese-funded road project in Catanduanes.

The awarding of the project, known as Contract Package I (CP I), was questioned by the Philippine Military Academy '59 Foundation Inc. and former Cavite Rep. Plaridel Abaya, who claimed that the winning bid was overpriced for exceeding the project's approved budget ceiling.

The group noted that China Road and Bridge submitted a bid which was more than P200 million above the prescribed budget for the contract, which was allegedly a violation of the Government Procurement Reform Act or Republic Act 9184.

In May 2005, they asked the court to nullify the DPWH resolution awarding the contract to China Road and Bridge for Phase I of the Catanduanes Circumferential Road Project.

Named respondents were the secretaries of the DPWH, budget department and finance department, the head of the Bureau of Treasury and China Road and Bridge Corp.

But the high tribunal said the procurement guidelines of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, which is funding the project, governed the awarding of the contract, and under JBIC's guidelines, no ceiling was imposed on the project price.

The court said the PMA alumni could not use RA 9184 to question the contract because the said law was not yet in effect when the contract was approved. Instead, Executive Order 40 was applicable.

The high court further said that while EO 40 also prescribes that the approved budget contract is the ceiling of the bid price, it also provides an exception for projects financed by international institutions.

The loan agreement between the Philippine government and the JBIC stipulates that "the procurement of goods and services for the Arterial Road Links Development Project (Phase IV), of which CP I is a component, is to be governed by the JBIC Procurement Guidelines."

The JBIC's procurement guidelines do not impose a ceiling on bids and state that the contract could be awarded to the company with the lowest evaluated bid.

The court added that since China Road and Bridge Corp. gave the lowest bid, it was awarded the contract even though its bid was 28.95 percent higher than the approved budget for the contract.

The high tribunal also junked the petitioners' contention that the loan agreement was neither a treaty, an international agreement nor an executive agreement since the JBIC is a banking agency and has a separate personality from the Japanese government.

The court said the loan agreement was an executive agreement because it was crafted based on an exchange of notes between Yoshihisa Ara, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Philippines, and then Foreign Affairs Secretary Domingo Siazon, in behalf of their respective governments The exchange of notes, or a record of routine agreement, showed that the two governments reached an understanding on Japanese loans to the Philippines meant to promote the country's stabilization and development, it added.

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SO THE PEOPLE MAY KNOW: REJOINDER TO THE ARROYO-RECTO STATEMENT

Senators Arroyo and Recto began their Statement of 10 February 2007 by saying: *"We ran for the Senate and won on the Arroyo administration slate. Nothing that has happened since gives us reason not to do the same in our reelection bid."*

This is surely one of the most dishonest political apologia of the year for it tries to sweep under the rug GMA's various impeachable offenses arising from

- **The "HELLO, GARCI" electoral cheating scandal**
- **The Jocjoc Bolante fertilizer scam**
- **The IMPSA bribery scandal**
- **The Jose Pidal scandal**
- **The Northrail Project scandal**
- **The Venable Contract scandal**
- **The jueteng scandal**
- **Proclamation 1017 and EO 464**

as well as her command responsibility for the numerous and unabated extrajudicial killings of activists and journalists.

Though these offenses had been the bases of two serious efforts to impeach GMA, Sen. Arroyo and Recto simply shrugged them off as mere "serious blunders". While Sen. Arroyo (but not Sen. Recto) may have participated in exposing and opposing some of the above scandals such as the Jose Pidal scandal and the Venable Contract scandal, he invariably stopped his Blue Ribbon Committee's hearings whenever the investigation of GMA's or her family's shenanigans started coming to a crunch.

Senators Arroyo and Recto must have had a hundred million reasons for joining GMA's senatorial slate but they should not try to hoodwink people into believing that one of these reasons is GMA's respect or tolerance for their independence.

It is also hypocritical for them to accuse the opposition of not denouncing "attempts by military adventurers to topple the government and set up another one outside the Constitution" for weren't they among those in EDSA Dos who applauded the withdrawal of support from President Joseph Ejercito Estrada by the top brasses of the AFP and PNP led by Gen. Angelo Reyes? And didn't they support GMA's extraconstitutional conspiracy to steal the Erap presidency?

Besides, what military adventurism are they talking about? If they are referring to the Oakwood incident or the February 2006 affair, it is clear that none of these incidents can qualify as attempted coups. So what is there to denounce? Moreover, the verdict is still out on these cases. Staunch human rights advocate Joker Arroyo seems to have forgotten a basic tenet: a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The opposition certainly recognizes "the constitutional succession of the Vice President", but it also has the right to question the legitimacy of a Vice President whose election is the subject of an electoral protest.

The claim that the "economy is improving" is highly questionable inasmuch as GMA and her lackeys are notorious for their cheating and lying ways not only in elections but even in economic measurements. So the so-called "economic gains" being touted by the administration are most likely based on statistical manipulations of the "dagdag-bawas" kind.

And even if some of our country's economic indicators may look good to our international creditors, they mean nothing at all to the Filipino people who are suffering from the onerous EVAT that was pushed by Sen. Recto and other GMA puppets in Congress. Contrary to the Arroyo-Recto claim that "little by little, the people are getting better off," the SWS reported last December 2006 that a record high of 19 % of families (equivalent to 3.3 million households) had experienced household hunger while 52% of families had rated themselves poor.

That is why GMA's net national rating (percentage of those satisfied minus percentage of those dissatisfied) has been consistently negative for the past two and a half years (as reported by SWS last December 2006) and why 54% of Filipinos approve (as compared to 20% who disapprove) of "requiring GMA to leave office before the end of her term in 2010" as reported by SWS in January 2006.

Sen. Arroyo and Recto say that the "political choice in the coming election is to trip up the country or help it along." Wrong! The political choice before our people is whether to elect senators, representatives, and local officials who will promote the people's interests by, among other things, checking, if not checkmating, a cheating, lying, stealing, and oppressive administration or whether to elect GMA lackeys who will perpetuate, abet, defend, and cover up her misgovernance and mismanagement. The coming election is going to be a historic fight between the Filipino people and GMA.

The opposition is committed to good governance, transparency, accountability, industrialization, modernization, high economic growth, and a much more equitable distribution of wealth in our society. It will continue to speak for the masses of our people who have repeatedly expressed their disapproval of GMA's policies and programs and who continue to question her legitimacy.

To join GMA's senatorial ticket, as Sen. Arroyo and Recto have done, or to vote for its candidates, is not to "help our country along" but to subject our people to more cheating, lying, and stealing in high places as well as continued extrajudicial killings, widespread impoverishment and unemployment, high taxes, high costs of living, and high crime rates.

GENUINE OPPOSITION

Advt

Correction

IN THE FEB. 17 issue, an article on page D1 of the Super section—"'My brother is not a Pig!'"—attributed the statement mistakenly to Mimilanie (aka Melanie) Marquez. The famous line was uttered by Nora Aunor in the film "Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamo." Marquez' infamous line, on the other hand, was, "Don't judge my brother (actor Joey Marquez). He's not a book."

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, February 21, 2007
Ash Wednesday

1st Reading:	Jl 2:12-18
2nd Reading:	2 Cor 5:20-6:2
Gospel:	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be careful not to make a show of your righteousness before people. If you do so, you do not gain anything from your Father in heaven. When you give something to the poor, do not have it trumpeted before you, as do those who want to be seen in the synagogues and in the streets in order to be praised by the people. I assure you, they have been already paid in full.

"If you give something to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your gift remains really secret. Your Father who sees what is kept secret, will reward you.

"When you pray, do not be like those who want to be seen. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues or on street corners to be seen by everyone. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is with you in secret; and your Father who sees what is kept secret will reward you.

"When you fast, do not put on a miserable face as do the hypocrites. They put on a gloomy face, so people can see they are fasting. I tell you this: they have been paid in full already. When you fast, wash your face and make yourself look cheerful, because you are not fasting for appearances or for people, but for your Father who sees beyond appearances. And your Father, who sees what is kept secret will reward you."

Commentary

Even now, says the Lord, return with your whole heart: rend your hearts. Lent is about stopping in our ways and listening/obeying the word of the Lord who is merciful and gracious and waiting on us. And it is about doing this together as a people, a community that is mindful of its need to tap into the passion of believing and obeying once again. We are ambassadors of God—God appealing through us to the world. And what we bring always to every situation and relationship is reconciliation—that we all might walk together again with God and with each other.

This is all about hope! This time is all about making peace! This time is about living passionately, gracefully and truthfully—about getting back in touch with the intensity of our baptismal vows. Do you promise to live forever in the freedom of the children of God? Do you promise to resist evil and refuse to be mastered by any sin? Do you promise to live under no sin of power but the sign of the cross? We gather and we once again follow Jesus, picking up our cross that comes from preaching the gospel.

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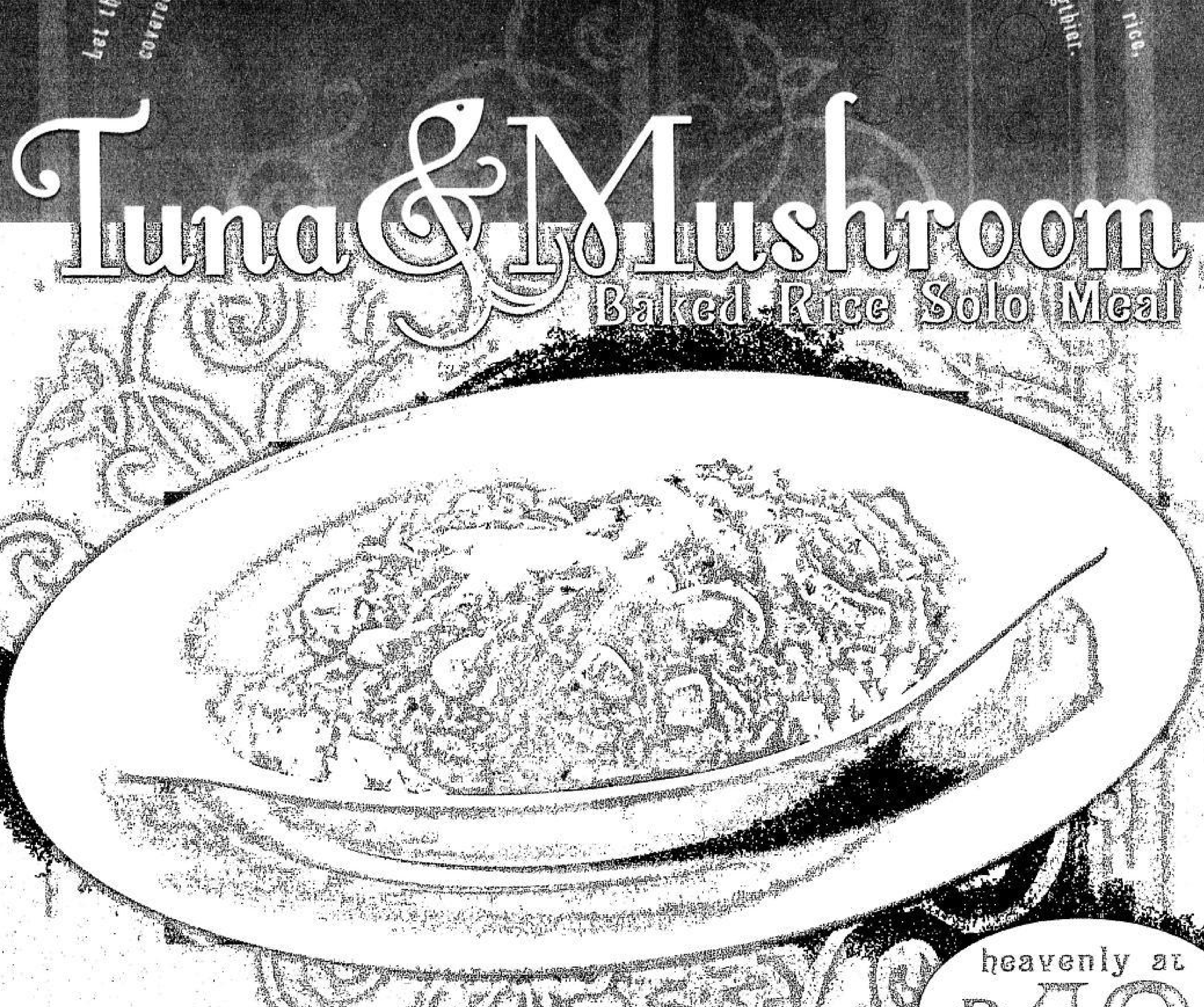
Let there be a meal worthy of praise! Share in a heavenly dish of tuna flakes, sweet corn, and rich mushroom sauce on a bed of steaming white rice, covered generously with melted Mozzarella cheese baked to perfection. Truly a blessing from Greenwich. You'll wish the Lenten Season was longthier.

Behold.

Tuna & Mushroom

Baked Rice Solo Meal



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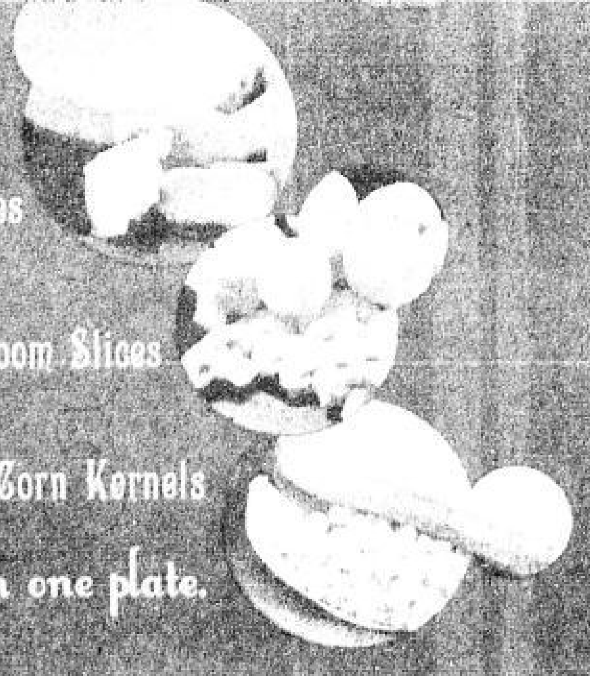

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19th VISAYAS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

February 21, 2007 Salon de España, Casino Español de Cebu
Keynote Speaker: SEC. JESLI A.LAPUS, Department of Education

Corporate Social Responsibility

Makes Life Good For All

Quality Education
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Message of the President

MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

Warmest greetings to the members, officers and staff of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) on the occasion of your 19th Visayas Annual Membership Meeting!

The theme this year, "Breaking Barriers," shows PBSP's relentless efforts in strategically implementing programs and projects that reduce poverty and make life better for many Filipinos in the Visayas. Nationwide, the men and women of the PBSP have successfully broken many barriers to social development through its dedication to corporate social responsibility and commitment to the empowerment of the country's grassroots communities in the last 36 years.

I also commend PBSP's 19 years of presence in the Visayas because the foundation has reached all the provinces in the region through projects on livelihood, environmental conservation, and provision of basic social services. This year, PBSP celebrates the investments of the business sector for education and rehabilitation of communities affected by disaster. We value education because it creates better citizens and we recognize the need to restore hope and revive the productivity of our countrymen who were affected by the disaster.

My administration expresses its sincerest gratitude and appreciation to PBSP for including these challenging tasks in its priorities. May PBSP reap more success in all its social development endeavors. Together, let us continue to enrich more lives and give more hope to our people.

Mabuhay!

Breaking Barriers

To Build and Rebuild Lives

The process of building and developing each person's productive capacities happens in many frontiers. The classroom is where the country's future good citizens are molded. The urban and grassroots communities are the settings in nurturing people empowerment and self-reliance. The business community, on the other hand, is a strategic arena that produces effective social development programs.

For the members and partners of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), there are no boundaries in the development assistance that must be extended. This is because there are still millions of Filipinos who don't have access to enough income, conserved environment and basic social services like potable water, education and health facilities. To gain these opportunities for the people, there are, however, barriers that must be broken.

The year 2006 saw the decisive dismantling of the digital divide between cities and provinces, urban centers and rural areas, with the widening of PBSP's priority areas of projects on information and communication technology (ICT) for education. This move is a step higher in the pillar of education projects and advocacies that PBSP is regularly supporting.

2006, however, was a trying time for Visayas as it experienced two disasters of immense magnitude - the landslide in the town of Saint Bernard, Southern Leyte and the oil spill in the waters surrounding the island province of Guimaras. The former wiped out an entire village and displaced hundreds of people. The latter threatened a vast ecosystem with diverse marine life and adversely affected the livelihood of thousands of families.

The challenges of providing better education and rebuilding many shattered lives made PBSP once again present in all three regions in the Visayas. PBSP is already a 36-year old corporate-led social development foundation with operations nationwide. Its continuous presence in the Visayas has spanned nineteen years and its poverty reduction programs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) engagements has improved thousands of lives in the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Biliran, Bohol, Capiz, Cebu, Eastern Samar, Guimaras, Iloilo, Leyte, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Northern Samar, Siquijor, Southern Leyte and Western Samar.

Building lives

Education is one of the very important development platforms of PBSP, and the academe, the prime breeding ground of productive citizens, is where the various education projects are implemented. In the Visayas, PBSP's menu of education projects includes the establishment of school buildings, ICT laboratories and learning resource centers, provision of books and classroom peripherals, scholarship, capacity building of teachers and parents, and leadership in education advocacy consortia. Two education approaches of PBSP in the Visayas are especially distinct: the Metro Cebu Workforce Development and Education Program (MCWDEP) with its holistic outlook at benchmarking the quality of education vis-à-vis the requirements of the business sector, and the ICT in education projects for making islands, cities, municipalities and far-flung barrios connected with the global community.

MCWDEP is a strategic response to the 1997 Asian economic crisis that retrenched thousands of skilled workers. The program has two primary thrusts: to instill and develop the technical and entrepreneurial skills of the workers for sustained income above poverty threshold, and to improve the quality of education so that the students, the future workforce, can satisfactorily comply with industry requirements. The education engagements supported by the MCWDEP are the Science and Technology Education Center (STEC) and the Coalition for Better Education (CBE).

The STEC is a specialized education system offering a special and more advanced curriculum fitted for above average performing pre-elementary, elementary and high school students. It was piloted in Lapu-Lapu City and subsequently replicated in Danao City, Cebu. STEC students are proficient in ICT and other academic disciplines, thus considered employable upon high school graduation. The Lapu-Lapu STEC was a product of multi-sector partnerships: the Department of Education (DepEd), the Lapu-Lapu City government, local businesses, private individuals, and civil society. PBSP is instrumental in its improvement and promotion through scholarship, provision of learning infrastructures, capacity building of parents and teachers, and ICT development. Lapu-Lapu STEC has so far produced seven batches of high school graduates while Danao STEC is operating for three years.

The Coalition for Better Education (CBE) is PBSP Visayas' platform for education improvement. The CBE is a consortium of business, academe, government and civil society that integrates all efforts undertaken by various organizations for the improvement of the quality of education in the country. It was convened in 2001 by PBSP together with the Aboitiz Group Foundation, Inc. (AGFI) and the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc. (RAFI). The long-term objectives of the CBE include increased employability of the graduates; the creation of teachers that are competent in ICT, science, mathematics, English and values; and the promotion of the PTCA's (parent-teachers community association) role in the sustainability of education infrastructures at the community level.

Under CBE, the iN.CUBE or Involving Communities for Better Education rationalizes that education is a job or responsibility of the community. Thus, the school becomes more effective if proactively supported by the parents, the barangay leaders and the businesses within the community. The iN.CUBE is currently piloted in Barangay Tayud, Consolacion, Cebu in partnership with the DepEd. On the other hand, CBE's CEFTEX or Center for Teacher Excellence is geared towards the overall molding of the pre-service and in-service teachers because it is a given fact that the "teacher factor" plays a major role in the youth's formal education. The CEFTEX is currently housed in the Cebu Normal University and has brought in corporate players and strategic partners investing both resources and expertise.

Elsewhere in the Visayas, PBSP's education platform comes to villages and communities in the form of school buildings, classroom paraphernalia and capacity building for the cooperatives and community-based organizations. Coca-Cola Foundation Philippines, through its Little Red Schoolhouse Project, Philip Morris Manufacturing Philippines and Petron Foundation lead the pack of education advocates. On the other hand, community folks in PBSP's current priority provinces such as Bohol, Cebu, Guimaras, Samar and Southern Leyte receive their share of education assistance through trainings on leadership, teambuilding and simple bookkeeping, among other valuable interventions that would help their respective community-based institutions.

With the help of ICT, PBSP affirms that education excellence is a realistic option for every student, teacher and academic institution whether they are located in cities, island barangays or rural villages. To enhance student performance, there are technological advancements that make the academe a more dynamic field.

In the past, ICT-based education projects of the business sector were primarily established in the urban centers for two reasons: the availability of facilities that were otherwise not present in the rural areas, and the far-flung barangays being beyond the business' area of operations. The last fiscal year, however, experienced the enthusiasm of business to include, rather than exclude, high schools from rural areas in their ICT-based education projects. For instance, there are already twenty high schools in the Visayas that became recipient of the education packages provided by SMART Communications through its Smart Schools Program (SSP).

The direct clients of the SSP are the teachers who are challenged to improve their teaching competency by applying ICT in their classroom instruction. Collectively, the 20 SMART Schools reached 29,000 students in the Visayas. Similar with other PBSP engagements, the SSP is a multi-stakeholder partnership, which also involves the Microsoft Philippines through its Partners In Learning (PIL) Program, the SWEEP or the SMART Wireless Engineering and Education Program, and DepEd.

The PIL is a demonstration of Microsoft's long-term commitment at ensuring that teachers and students achieve their fullest potential through greater access to the latest computer technologies and ICT training. Under the banner of "No Teacher Left Behind," PIL rolls out ICT training series so that no students and teachers will be left behind in the fast paced dynamics of the digital decade. Collectively, 4,491 teachers from all provinces in the Visayas were trained.

Still consistent with PIL's thrusts, the Innovative Teachers Leadership Award (ITLA) was launched to recognize teacher excellence in effectively integrating technology in classroom learning. Another PIL banner project is the "Potensyal," a search event for divisions and schools in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The school or division's "Potensyal" refers its leadership and innovativeness, openness to technology, and capacity to use ICT to reach students, teachers and other institutions that lag behind the educational system.

Rebuilding lives

Providing long-term rehabilitation assistance to areas ravaged by disasters has been part of PBSP's 36 year legacy. In the last two decades, PBSP has provided assistance in the form of housing, permanent resettlement, relief goods and livelihood projects to thousands of families affected by the Baguio earthquake, the Mount Pinatubo eruption and the Typhoon Ruping, among other calamities. In helping disaster-stricken communities, PBSP borrows from its time tested poverty reduction strategy - the Area Resource Management Program or ARM.

First, the ARM strategy strengthens local stakeholders such as homeowners' associations, cooperatives, community-based organizations and local government units. Second, it provides sustainable livelihood and makes basic social services such as education and health facilities accessible. Finally, ARM looks into the conservation and rehabilitation of the environment. This includes planting of trees or mangroves, management of watersheds, and advocacy of laws that encourage environmental conservation and protection.

In Saint Bernard, PBSP's Southern Leyte Rehabilitation Program (SLRP) aims to ensure the socio-economic recovery of 330 families from Barangay Guinsaugon that have survived the landslide. The SLRP is a collaboration of the government, civil society and business. Initially, PBSP channeled relief goods coming from member companies and corporate partners. PBSP's community organizing activities leading to the creation of the New Guinsaugon Homeowners' Association coincided with the construction of houses by the Gawad Kalinga and the Philippine National Red Cross through the Habitat for Humanity. Moreover, social services facilities such as school buildings, health units, day care center and multi-purpose center were constructed in the relocation site while The Children's Hour has also engaged with PBSP for the scholarship of 56 elementary and high school students. Finally, ABS-CBN Foundation, through its Sagip Kapamilya Program, and the Plan International, have provided a potable water system to the relocation site.

PBSP has pledged to mobilize funds for Saint Bernard to support livelihood and basic social services projects. The livelihood assistance was in full swing three months after the disaster with the training of 50 survivors on carpentry and masonry. They were part of the workforce the construction of houses in the relocation area, having been certified by the Technical and Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA). There are also 30 households involved in the production of concrete hollow blocks, which are absorbed in the construction activities. Other ongoing livelihood projects are the production of virgin coconut oil, furniture making, production of organic fertilizer and the culture of high value fish species.

As in the past experiences of PBSP in managing disaster response efforts, the social conscience of business has remained potent. Majority of the assistance for the landslide victims primarily came from the corporate sector, and the presence of PBSP in the area in the next three years at least will depend significantly on the business sectors recognition and encouragement of the people's productivity.

Meanwhile, the Guimaras Area Resource Management Program (GARMP) is geared towards the rehabilitation of the livelihood and income sources of some 4,000 families affected by the oil spill. Like SLRP, the strategies of the GARMP shall be consistent with the ARM approach. Thus, PBSP's initial steps in the implementation of the program were the partnerships with the provincial and municipal government units of Guimaras, the popularization of the GARMP in the business community, and the engagements with viable local proponents and community-based organizations.

Breaking Barriers

The virtues of empowerment and self-reliance were once cascaded by PBSP all over Visayas. Now, in the age of information and in an era marred by natural disasters and other catastrophes, PBSP is still armed with these virtues as it reestablishes itself in all regions in the Visayas. Because of the many partnerships built and harnessed by the business sector, the government and the civil society, gains were reaped, barriers were broken, and islands and people are bridged closer.

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Comelec to test Internet voting

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

DESPITE THE ATTACKS ON ITS LEgality, the pilot-test of Internet voting will proceed in Singapore in April although the results might be "nonbinding," an official of the Commission on Elections said yesterday.

Comelec Commissioner Florentino Tuason said the Comelec would re-think their position, after senators and elections experts insisted Internet voting is not provided for under Republic Act 9189 or the Overseas Absentee Voting Act.

In a Senate hearing yesterday, Sen. Richard Gordon said the law merely provides that the Comelec will "study" the option of allowing overseas Filipinos to cast their votes through the Internet, and will submit a report to Congress afterwards.

"The law clearly says 'study' not 'implement.' There is nothing to be interpreted. It says study only," said Gordon, who chairs the Senate committee on constitutional amendments.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile agreed, adding the law suffered from "defects" since it did not say what will happen after Comelec studies Internet voting.

Solon's fate up to airport security execs

By Tarra Quismundo

BUESER

MANILA INTERNATIONAL AIRport Authorities (Miaa) executives will have the last word on whether or not Laguna Rep. Danton Bueser should be held criminally liable for the bullets and pistol magazine found inside his carry-on bag as he attempted to pass the third and last security X-ray check at the airport last Friday night.

Airport security chief retired Gen. Angel Atutubo said Miaa General Manager Alfonso Cusi would decide what action to take once police have finished investigating the incident—a security breach that has already led to the sacking of two airport X-ray operators who had missed the contraband on the first and second screening terminals.

Police said Bueser, who was stopped from boarding a Philippine Airlines flight to the United States because of the incident, may face charges for illegal possession of ammunition, penalized under Republic Act 8294, and violation of the ban on firearms and ammunition currently in place because of the election season.

Planted

In a statement, Cusi said he would closely monitor the investigation being conducted jointly by Miaa and the Philippine National Police Aviation Security Group.

"I have directed a full investigation into this mater to eliminate doubts being raised about the incident.

Airport security reported that Bueser owned the 20 bullets and a pistol magazine found in his carry-on bag.

Bueser, however, denied this, saying the bullets were planted in his bag. Two previous X-ray terminals, he said, had not detected the bullets and magazine in his bag.

A security review of the X-rays, however, showed that the bullets were already in the bag at the first terminal but the operators (as shown on closed circuit television) had looked away and let the congressman pass.

'Turned over'

Bueser had been taken to the aviation security office but was later "turned over" to his fellow lawmaker, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay (1st district).

"While the investigation is in progress, I wish to reiterate to our honorable (members of Congress) as well as other government officials, even those classified as VIPs by virtue of their local or foreign representations, that the security measures we are implementing at all Naia Terminals ... are intended for all passengers, regardless of their rank or status in the society or in government," said Cusi.

Bullets in luggage: They never learn

By Tarra Quismundo

ONE ONLY HAS TO LOOK AT THE SIGNS TO see that they are banned at the airport.

But somehow, superstition is stronger than caution for some passengers caught carrying bullets at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia). These items are banned from airports worldwide.

"We catch many carrying bullets, usually only a piece, because they say they use it as an *anting-anting* (an amulet or good luck charm)," said Senior Supt. Efren Labiang, chief of the 1st Police Center for Aviation Security.

"Most are OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) from the provinces ... But all of those seized are just amulets, they are no longer classified as live ammunition," Labiang said.

Before and after a US-bound Laguna lawmaker was apprehended for carrying live bullets and a pistol magazine at the airport on Friday, two departing passengers were also intercepted at the X-ray checks for carrying bullets in their handcarried bags.

Reynaldo Manuel, a Taipei-bound Filipino passenger, was stopped at the Naia Terminal 1 at 10:10 a.m. on Feb. 16 after airport inspectors detected two bullets, one for a .45-caliber pistol and another for a .38-caliber, in his bag.

In a handwritten statement given to police, he said the bullets were his amulets. "*Dahil ang alam ko ito ay pangkontra sa kulam* (Because I know that this gives protection against witchcraft)," Manuel's statement read.

Manuel, intercepted before boarding an Eva Air flight to Taipei, was then let go after police confiscated his bullets.

"You know how old people are, they have superstitions that bullets can protect them against danger when they are in a different place," said 2nd PCAS chief Jose Palencia, who oversees the Manila Domestic Airport.

Manuel's apprehension came just hours before Laguna Rep. Danton Bueser was stopped from boarding a US-bound Philippine Airlines flight at the Naia Centennial Terminal at 9:22 p.m. of the same day for carrying 20 caliber .380 bullets and a pistol magazine.

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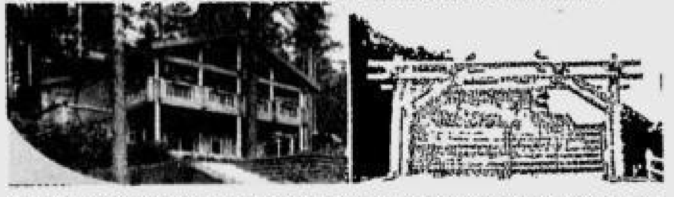

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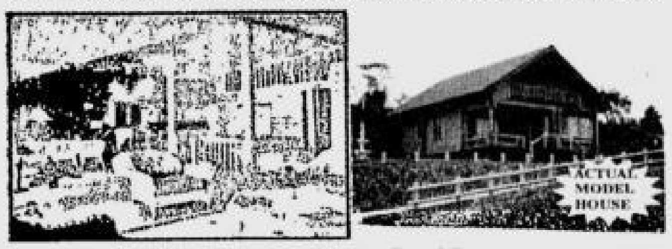

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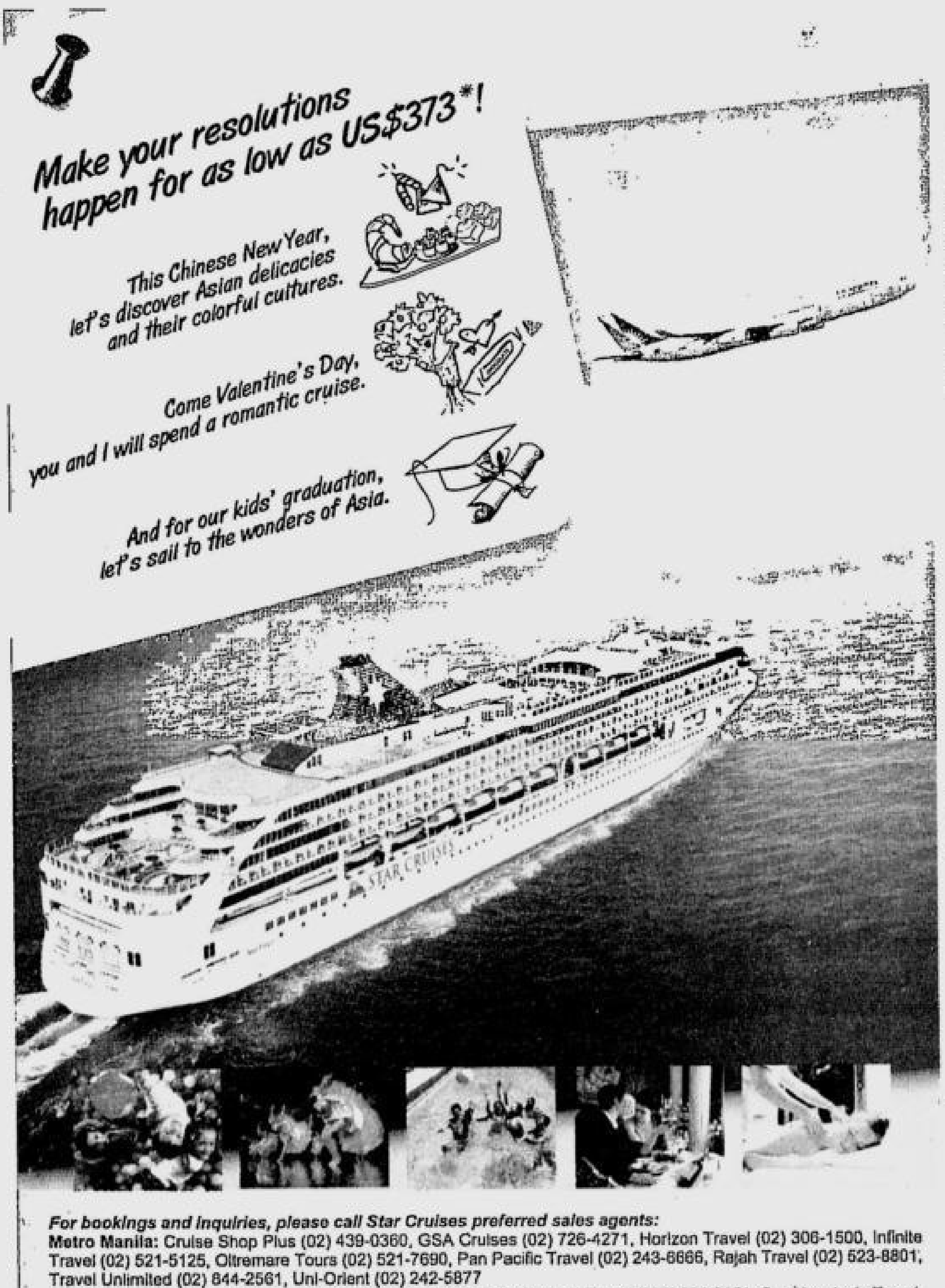

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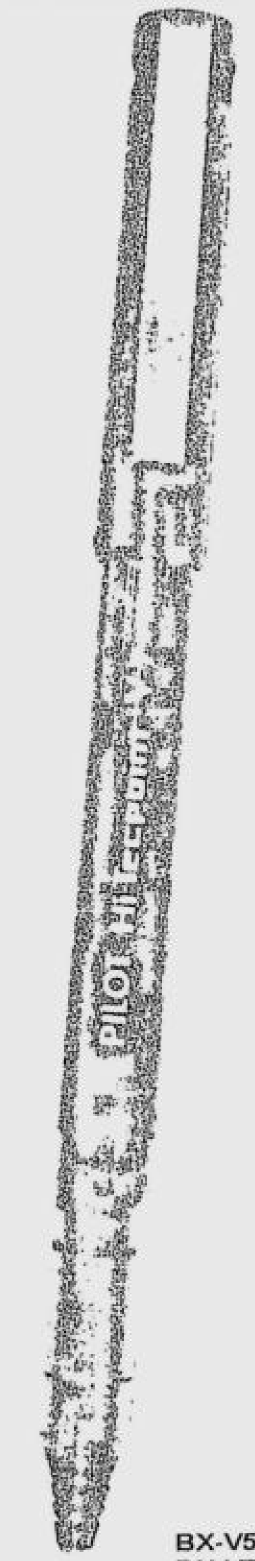

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KL religious police zero in . . .

From page A1

moral, including sex between unmarried people.

The spies, known in the Malay language as "mat skoding," would tip off the Islamic police department about alleged immoral activities in the northeastern state of Terengganu, The Star newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Terengganu and neighboring Kelantan are two of Malaysia's most conservative states.

"Some of these spies could be waitresses or even janitors at hotels acting as ... undercover agents for our religious department," Rosol Wahid, the chair of a state Islamic welfare committee, was quoted as saying.

Rosol said the spies would largely look for unmarried couples committing "khalwat," or "close proximity," a crime under Islamic law in Malaysia akin to adultery. It applies to unchaperoned meetings between men and women.

Un-Islamic behavior the part-time spies will look out for includes unmarried couples kissing or holding hands, the Star said.

Those found guilty of khalwat can be jailed for up to two months under Islamic laws, which do not apply to non-Muslims.

'Accurate details' needed

The spies would be given rewards for each tip they provide, Rosol told The Star. Rosol could not be immediately reached because of a public holiday.

Rosol said the spies were needed because "accurate details are required for the enforcement officers to act, otherwise they would be pouncing on married couples," The Star reported.

Invasion of privacy

He said the spies would keep watch in parks and secluded areas to nab dating couples intending to engage in sex.

The Terengganu state official's comments do not necessarily reflect common sentiment in Malaysia, a predominantly Muslim nation of 26 million people.

$333 fine

Earlier this month, the top Islamic leader of another state, Perlis, urged Islamic authorities to stop rewarding public tip-offs on Muslim couples who behave immorally, saying it was against Islamic teachings because it encouraged invasion of privacy.

Still, khalwat convictions are common in the country.

In one of the most famous cases, a 21-year-old Malaysian Muslim woman was fined 1,200 ringgit ($333) last year after she was caught by the moral police in an Argentine soccer player's bedroom.

Last October, religious police in another part of this mainly Muslim country caused an outcry when they mistakenly raided the rented holiday apartment of a Christian American couple in an island resort on suspicion that they were unmarried Muslims in "close proximity".

The incident embarrassed Malaysia, which is seeking to woo tourists and persuade expatriates to set up second homes in the country.

It is not clear why the couple, who are not Muslims, were targeted. *AP, Reuters*

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ALL TOGETHER NOW: Amputee Joseph del Gallego (center) and the PeopleSupport team. JUNJIE MENDOZA/CDN

One-legged goalie winner in game of life

From page A1

tournament matches on the playing field.

Of course, it's not easy.

"What is difficult is catching ground balls," he said. "That's when I really dive for the ball and then up again."

A grim verdict

Still, things had never been easy since he was diagnosed with bone cancer in his left leg when he was 17. At that time, diving for ground balls was the least of his worries.

Del Gallego, along with his parents, hopped from one hospital to another, hoping to get a more optimistic medical opinion. But no matter where they went, the verdict was the same: The leg had to go.

For someone who was into football and swimming seriously, playing in such tournaments as the Palarong Pambansa and the Go-for-Goal soccer program, losing a leg could have resulted in fits of depression.

"Fortunately, God gave me an open mind," Del Gallego said. "That made me a little more mature than I should have been at that age."

'God made me a goalie'

"I also found strength in people around me, my grandparents, my mom (Ma. Rowena), my wife Lourie Lei and kids, Joseph Andre and Owen Louis, and my aunt, Gigi Libby," said the 5-foot-10 goalie.

That support, plus the fact that he was skilled enough to continue playing his favorite sport despite his condition, made life easier.

"Fortunately for me, I've always been a goalie," he said. "Maybe God had plans back then. He made me a goalie so I just have to jump around and catch the ball, not run around and kick the ball."

Grandparents' gift

He actually has a prosthetic leg, a gift from grandparents Cesar and Emma Vincoy. But he doesn't use it during games.

"I may not be able to buy a new one," he joked.

So he is left with his talent, and a little edge over others that his physical handicap gives him: Del Gallego admits that somehow, the sight of a one-legged goalie distracts opponents, allowing him to foil shots at the net better.

Next generation

His feat has spawned a new generation of soccer players in his family. His sons, aged 6 and 2, have taken up the sport, joining him in pick-up games on Saturday mornings.

"I don't force them but they have shown interest in playing football," he said.

Despite being a call center team, PeopleSupport gets to play in tournaments with serious competition. In fact, the team plays top collegiate and commercial squads in Cebu.

A different kind of game

PeopleSupport also sees action in futsal and 7-a-side football tournaments, which suit Del Gallego better because he has a smaller goal to defend.

In the game of football, defeats come with victories.

In the game of life, Del Gallego has proven himself a winner.

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Vilma: 80% sure of running for gov

From page A1

under the administration's Team Unity.

Santos clarified in a phone interview with the INQUIRER that she was only "80 percent" sure about running for governor.

"My brother-in-law, Vice Gov. Ricky [Recto], also wants to run for the same position. We don't want a Recto vs Recto [scenario] in Batangas. It would look bad especially since our call is to unite the province," she said. "This matter should be settled within the family."

Santos, a multi-awarded actress before she entered politics, was mentioned in Recto's speech when he told the crowd that his wife was *Kapampangan*.

He added—in jest—that Santos became his wife because she had forced him into marriage.

Pampanga's loss was Batangas' gain, Recto added, because Santos was serving her third and last term as Lipa mayor.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who was seated in the middle of the stage, was smiling when Recto announced his wife's gubernatorial bid.

Three choices

Santos told the INQUIRER yesterday that she had consulted her husband, whom she calls "my mentor, my political adviser," before throwing her hat in the gubernatorial race.

"We had three choices: To run for governor, congresswoman or not to run at all," she said. "I told him I was leaning toward governor."

She pointed out that the job of governor is closest to her current role as mayor. "They are both administrative [in nature]. Being governor is on a larger scale and involves running the whole province."

She said that she would make the final decision "in a week's time."

"I have so many things to consider. My husband is also running for senator. I also want to support him in his campaign. But my constituents in Batangas have been persuading me to run. They told me that I should inspire the people of Batangas," she said.

In terms of platform, she said her priority would be to develop the province as a tourist attraction. "It's a very beautiful province. But to attract tourists, we need to build roads and undertake more infrastructure projects."

Public servant

But is Santos, better known as the Star for All Seasons, ready for the role of Batangas governor?

According to the Wikipedia, Santos was conferred an honorary doctorate degree in humanities by Lipa City College in 2005.

In the same year, she was also given the Plaridel Award by the University of the Philippines "for her achievements and contributions both as an actress and public servant."

According to a fan site, Santos took a special course in local management in 1998 at UP Diliman "in preparation for her role as city mayor."

Later that year, she ran for mayor of Lipa City, Batangas, and won.

Winning streak

But then Santos has a knack for winning. She is one of the most awarded actresses in Philippine cinema, alongside rival Nora Aunor.

She starred in her first movie at age 9 in the 1963 tearjerker "Trudis Liit," and won Best Child Performer from Famas, the country's oldest award-giving body.

Santos received 8 Urian Best Actress awards, the biggest number of citations given by this group of film critics.

In 1989, she was elevated to the Hall of Fame of Famas, after winning Best Actress five times.

According to a fan site, Santos is not only an award-winning actress, she has also been honored for her work as mayor of Lipa. Among her awards as public servant are: Outstanding City Mayor (from the Civil Service Commission), Best Overall Local Council Performance (given by the Boy Scouts of the Philippines), Outstanding Mayor in Region IV (from the Asosasyon ng Komentarista at Anawnser sa Pilipinas), among others.

Her running for governor of Batangas is perceived as a natural progression in her political career.

RP to appeal Kuwait death sentence on Pinoy maid

THE PHILIPPINES WILL APPEAL A DEATH sentence given a Filipino maid in Kuwait who was convicted of fatally stabbing her employer two years ago, saying the victim's family had already forgiven her, an official said Tuesday.

Claro Cristobal, spokesman for the Foreign Affairs Department, said the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait has been instructed to exhaust all efforts to save Marilou Ranario, including filing an appeal with Kuwait's highest court.

The 33-year-old teacher who worked in Kuwait as a domestic helper was found guilty of murdering her employer and sentenced to death by hanging in 2005.

She told the court she meant only to "harm" the woman, not kill her, her lawyer said. He quoted his client as saying her employer had abused her and was planning to arrange for men to rape Ranario.

Cristobal said the victim's family has issued affidavits of forgiveness that were presented in court in December, but that it refused to consider them.

"Normally, it's enough to overturn the sentence," he said.

It is legal and common practice in Kuwait and other Arab countries for victims to accept "blood money," or payments in return for the pardon of a convicted criminal.

More than 1.5 million Filipinos work in the Middle East, many as nurses, laborers and maids.

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Moderate quake jolts Mindanao

A MODERATE EARTHquake with a magnitude of 5.5 struck off the coast of Mindanao on Monday evening, the US Geological Survey said.

The quake, which hit at 7:13 p.m. was centered 144 kilometers east-southeast of the city of General Santos. It occurred at a depth of 63 kilometers.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology confirmed the report but said the quake had caused no damage to property and no tsunami warning was issued.

An earthquake of similar magnitude struck in the same area on Jan. 16.

The Philippines sits on what is commonly referred to as the Pacific "ring of fire," a zone of frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that encircles the Pacific Ocean basin.

The South East Asian archipelago nation of 86 million people is hit daily by earthquakes which are relatively low in magnitude causing little or no structural damage.

The last major earthquake to hit the Philippines was on July 16, 1990, when a quake of 7.7 magnitude shattered the northern Luzon city of Baguio killing and injuring an estimated 1,000 people.

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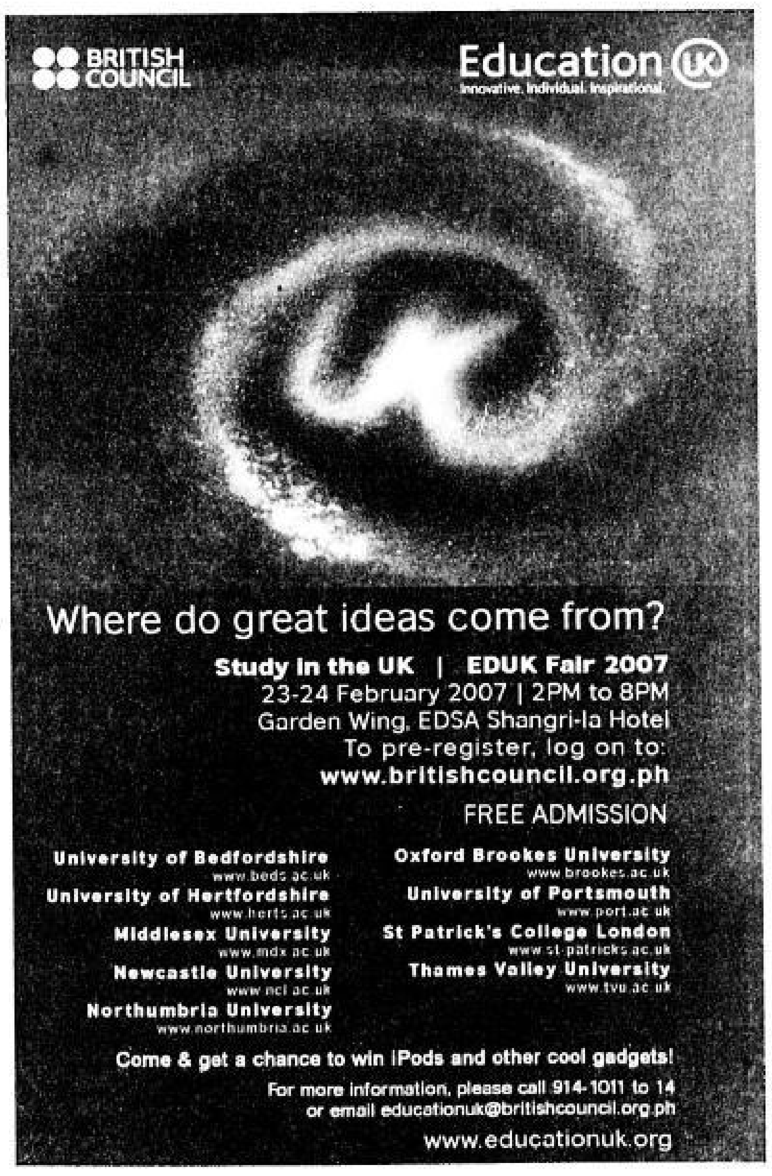
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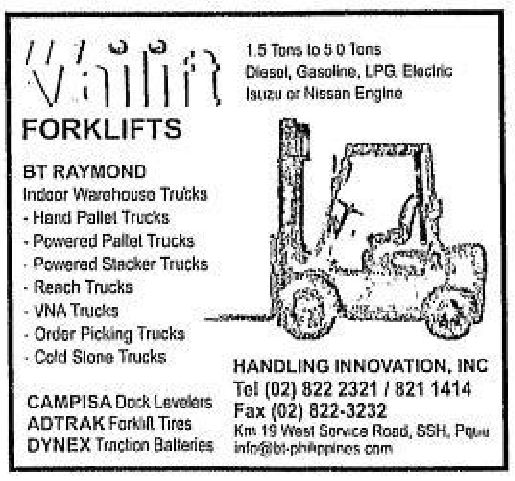
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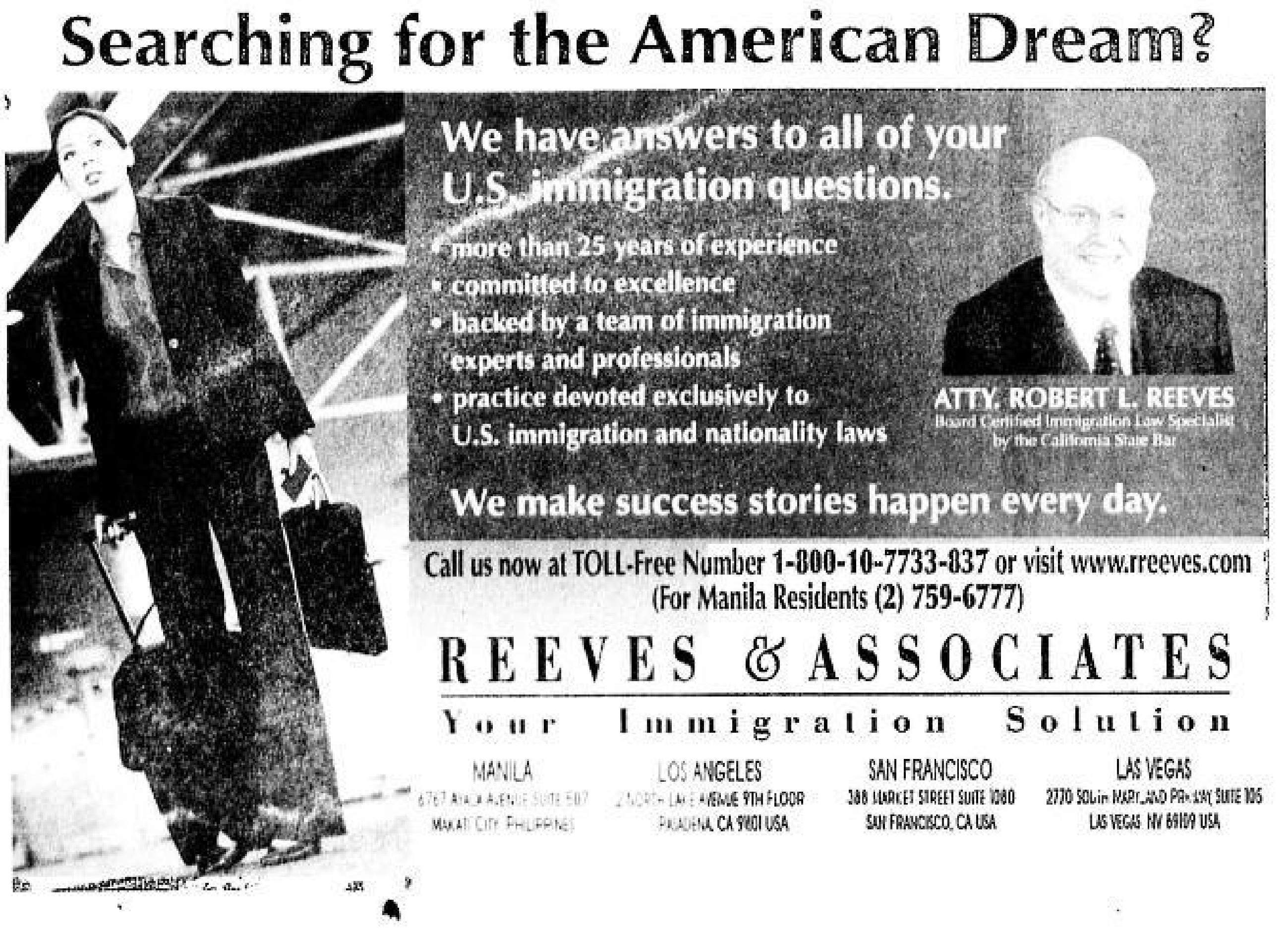
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Pineda: I don't bug the President about endorsing me

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon
and Lira Dalangin-Fernandez
Inquirer.net

LUBAO, PAMPANGA—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday graced the celebration of the 56th birthday of Lilia Pineda, wife of suspected jueteng lord Rodolfo "Bong" Pineda, but did not endorse her as the administration's candidate for Pampanga governor.

Pineda, a provincial board member, said she would still run for governor even without the President's endorsement. Which puzzles political observers in Ms Arroyo's home province.

Backed by 17 out of Pampanga's 21 mayors and the majority of barangay leaders, Pineda will run under Ms Arroyo's own party Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

Pineda said she expected the President to respect the "equity of the incumbent." Reelectionist Gov. Mark Lapid, a son of Sen. Lito Lapid, has been endorsed by the administration coalition Lakas-CMD.

"But I don't mind and I don't bug the President about this because I don't want to be a burden," Pineda told reporters.

Instead of flaunting that she could command the presence of the highest official of the land, Pineda downplayed the President's visit.

Just for good luck

She said Ms Arroyo's presence in the Mass might have been her way of seeking "*buenas* (good luck)" for the 12 senatorial candidates of the administration coalition's Team Unity.

The Mass was held at the 400-year-old St. Augustine Church here. Ms Arroyo has been hearing Masses in the church on special occasions.

The visit, Pineda said, should not be interpreted as the President's expression of her support for her gubernatorial bid. "This is not a political event," she said.

Bong Pineda did not show up in church.

Acknowledged leader

The Pineda celebration was held five hours before Team Unity candidates held a campaign rally in the City of San Fernando, east of Lubao.

The lead organizer, Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid, shut off Pineda, the rival of his son Mark, from the administration candidates' rally.

The President's son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, told the INQUIRER that "nothing was political" in Ms Arroyo's presence at the Lubao affair.

"Board Member Pineda is an acknowledged leader of Pampanga. Even us politicians go to the birthdays of barangay captains," he said.

The President was said to have cancelled a Cabinet meeting in Malacañang to attend the 8:30 a.m. Mass. She arrived at 8:25 a.m. and entered the church through a side gate.

Pineda, wearing a white blouse and pearl necklace, kissed her on the cheek after the President greeted her and the rest of the welcome party "*Mayap a abak* (Good Morning)."

They sat on the front pew and were seen talking to each other. In some instances, their facial expressions shifted from jovial to serious.

Representative Arroyo sat next to Pineda and later gave up his seat to the board member's running mate, Vice Gov. Joseller Guiao.

It must have been the first public meeting between Pineda and Ms Arroyo since a witness claimed that the former handed out envelopes containing money to election officials at the President's Quezon City home weeks before the May 2004 elections.

In July 2005, Michaelangelo Zuce, a witness in the Senate investigation of "jueteng," an illegal numbers game, also claimed that Pineda's husband had funded the special operations of former Elections Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to rig the results of the presidential election.

Garcillano is believed to be the male voice in what has been known as the "Hello, Garci" tape. In the wiretapped conversation, the female voice that sounded like Ms Arroyo's inquired about a one-million margin over her nearest rival.

Bishop begged off

Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto did not officiate at the Mass, but it was concelebrated by 35 priests.

Aniceto begged off, saying he had committed to meet a congregation of nuns in Mexico that morning.

While Pineda said the Mass was not a political event, she was endorsed by the parish priest.

Fr. Rodolfo de Guzman endorsed Pineda before some 1,000 Massgoers.

At the church grounds, more than 5,000 people had gathered, hearing the Mass broadcast over a loudspeaker.

Lesser evil

"We need someone like Atching Baby (Pineda's nickname) so that the Kapampangans would enjoy the fruits of progress," De Guzman said.

Interviewed after he shared breakfast with Ms Arroyo and Pineda, De Guzman said: "Yes [I will support Pineda] because she's the lesser evil."

"I prefer those who give than those who pocket money," he said.

Pineda said she was confident that she would win because she had the backing of the local officials.

"I am happy, my intentions are clear. I don't want to depend on people because they might get caught in the middle," she added.

Pineda brushed aside allegations linking her to jueteng. When elected, she said she would show the people what she could do.

During her talk with the President, Pineda said she pledged her support for the 12 senatorial candidates of Team Unity.

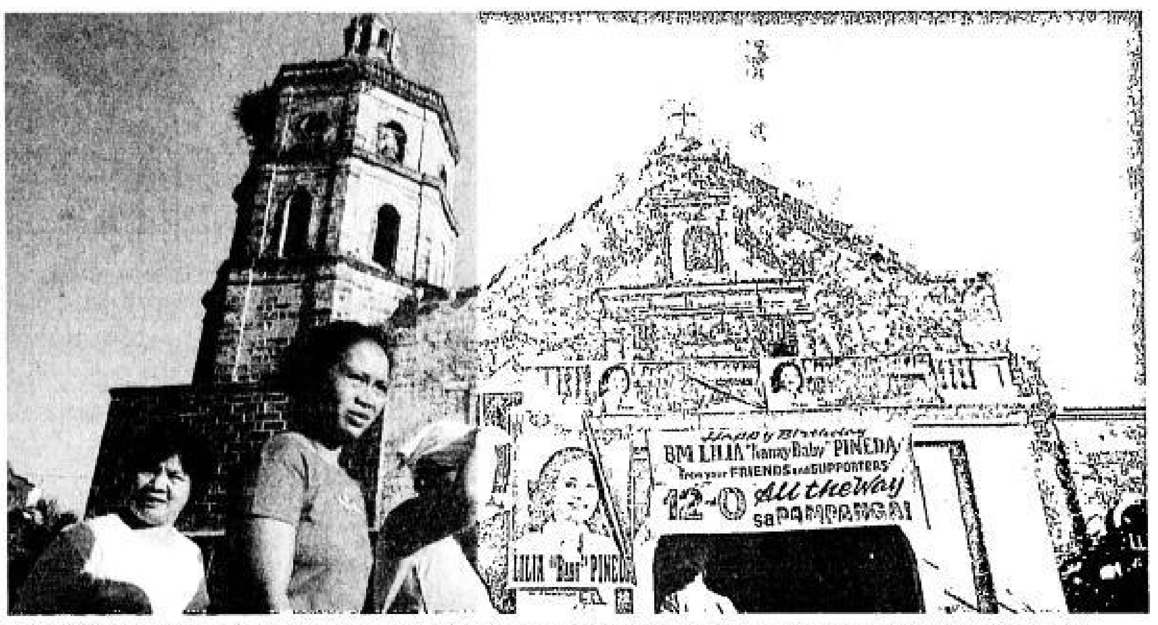
Pineda criticizes Mark

But at her birthday party, Pineda had only criticisms for Governor Lapid.

"Your office in the capitol is closed. Where will the people go?" said Pineda in Filipino.

"At his age [Lapid is 28], he still wants to play. He always wants to be in the movies. He's not really focused on the services in the province," she said of her rival.

She told reporters that in 2004, Lapid had three movies soon after getting elected. "He can't really focus (on doing his duties because he's too young)." *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*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PINEDA'S CAMPAIGN POSTERS are right up there on the facade of the ancient St. Augustine Parish in Lubao, Pampanga. The parish priest himself has endorsed her gubernatorial bid against Mark Lapid. LYN RILLON

Pampanga GMA dilemma; mum on endorsing warring clans

From page A1

Lubao Mayor Dennis Pineda.

Senatorial candidates Juan Miguel Zubiri, Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto, Michael Defensor, Vic Magsaysay, Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Prospero Pichay Jr. spoke one by one before the huge crowd outside the Church where a makeshift stage was erected.

Under the scorching heat, they presented their platforms, repeating what they had told voters in Cebu on Saturday and Davao City on Sunday.

Then the candidates went on separate ways, touching 'base with local supporters before converging again at the Bren Z. Guiao Convention Center in nearby San Fernando City for another proclamation rally, the third in four days.

There, the rest of the ticket—reelectionist Sen. Edgardo Angara, former Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Jamalul Kiram, Cesar Montano and Gov. Luis Singson—showed up to a packed coliseum.

Full force

The Kapampangans led by Sen. Lito Lapid, his son Governor Lapid, and San Fernando Mayor Oscar Rodriguez turned up in full force.

Before confetti and balloons rained down on the candidates, the President, speaking in Kapampangan, exhorted her provincemates to support her candidates, so that they in turn could help develop the province.

Senator Lapid and Pineda were friends who had parted ways.

In a Senate hearing in August 2005, Lapid tried to defend Pineda against allegations that she distributed money to poll officials in 2004 to gather support for Ms Arroyo's reelection bid.

But in November 2006, the friendship was shattered when Lapid, as chair of Lakas-NUCD in Pampanga, dumped Pineda's son Dennis as running mate of his son, Mark, in the latter's 2007 gubernatorial reelection bid.

The younger Lapid said he and his father had already committed their support for another vice gubernatorial aspirant.

Last December, Pineda announced she would face off with Mark Lapid for the province's top post. She said she wanted to free Pampanga from Lapid's "poor leadership," adding that Lapid's pro-poor image was a myth.

Focus on bigger picture

Before yesterday's rally, which started at 2:30 p.m., Defensor, the former presidential chief of staff, faced the cameras to call on Ms Arroyo to shy away from political intramurals, and focus on the bigger picture.

"I think the best for the President is really to stick to governance, and to stay away from local and national politics. Of course, (she was in the) proclamation (rallies), which we really need. But other than that, the President must be focused."

He said senatorial candidates were facing a nationwide campaign, not just local politics.

Senators Arroyo and Recto saw nothing wrong with them locking arms with both the Pinedas, supported by 17 mayors, and Lapid, allied with the other four mayors.

"That's the way politics is. It's nothing unusual. Over the world, there's always a division within a party," said Senator Arroyo in an interview.

He said that in politics one could not choose his or her supporters.

He begged off when asked about the chances of Pineda getting the endorsement of Ms Arroyo.

Local politics

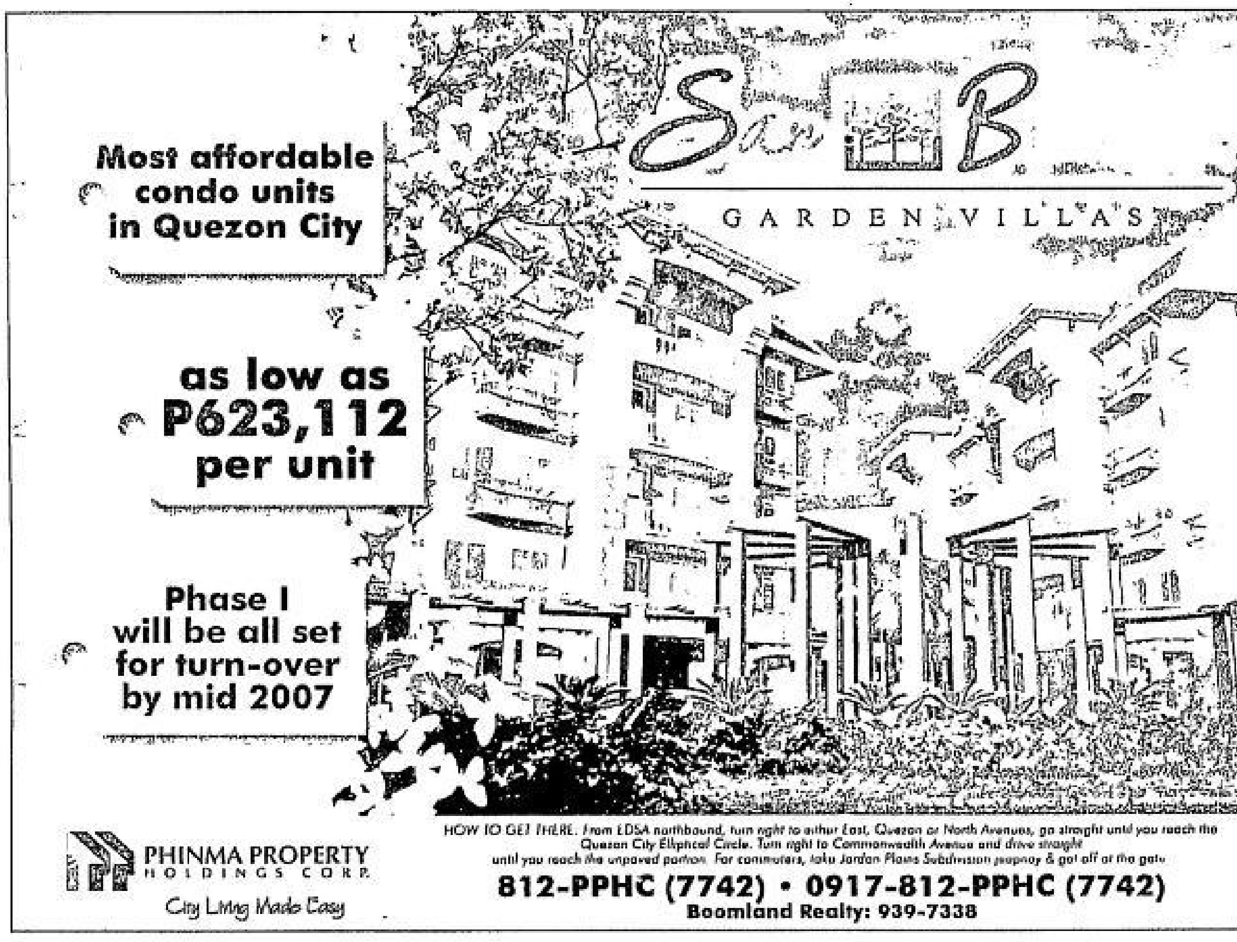
"I wouldn't know. As far as a candidate for a national office is concerned, the better thing is not to get involved in local issues. When you're a candidate like me, we're told, 'you come, you go to a place,'" he said.

Recto said he was careful not to antagonize local officials and their supporters.

Zubiri told the INQUIRER that the administration senatorial slate could not afford to take sides in a province with 1.4 million voters out of a population of more than 2 million.

He said members of Lakas-CMD, Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Liberal Party and Nationalist People's Coalition were expected to toe the administration line.

"I have to resign as secretary general of Lakas because I came here now as a member of Team Unity. I must reach out to all political parties (within the coalition)," said Zubiri, the representative of Bukidnon's 3rd district. *With a report from Inquirer Research*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For Noynoy sake, Kris to advance baby's birth

From page A1

at the Liberal Party's proclamation rally for Noynoy and reelectionist Sen. Francis Pangilinan.

"May 13 is the day before the election. Because of Noynoy, I will instead give birth on May 6. I don't want to give any trouble on Election Day," Kris said.

Lost lots of money

Kris, one of the highest paid endorsers in the country today, joked that she lost a good deal of money when she turned down offers for her to do commercials endorsing other senatorial candidates.

She lost some more when she agreed to do a TV ad for her brother free of charge.

"This is also the first time that I will shoot a commercial for free," Kris said.

She said she and her brother would shoot the commercial this coming weekend.

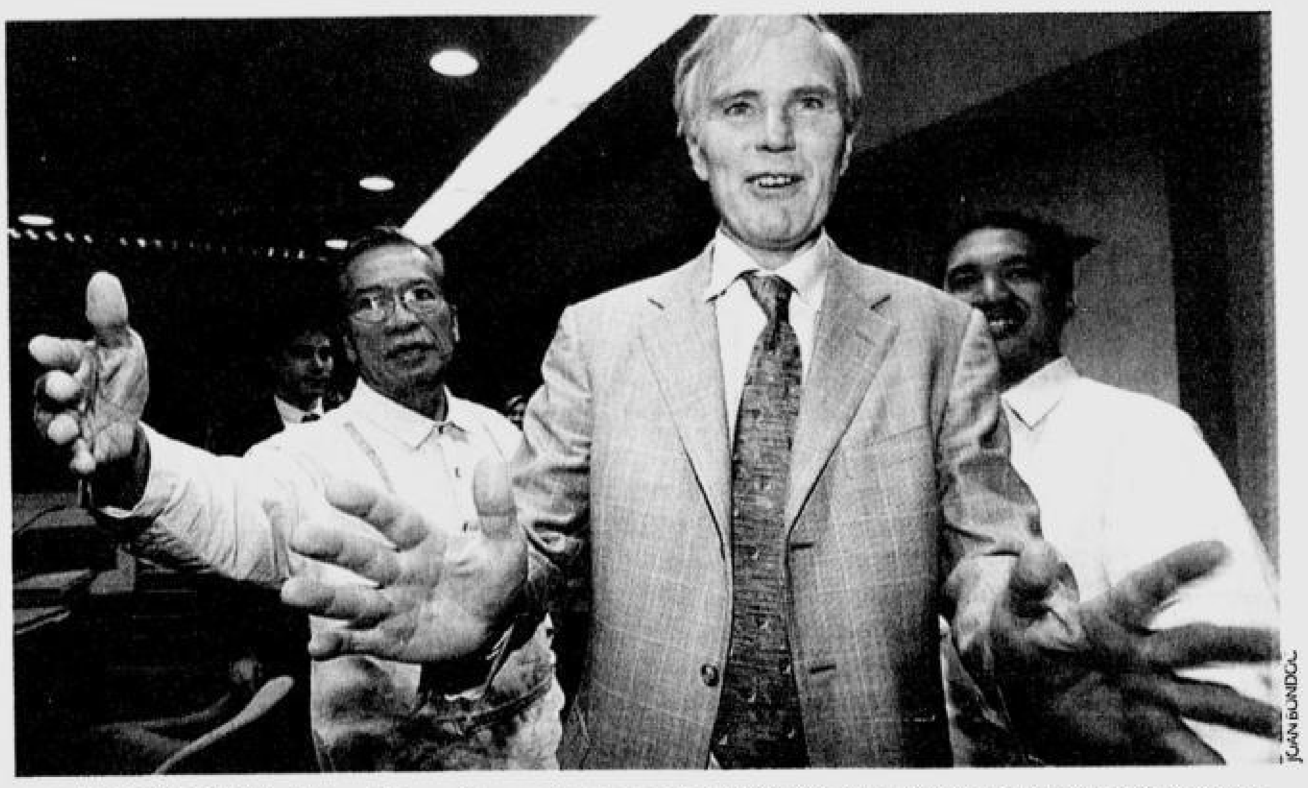
"I told my brother that I have to work to earn money so I can help him. But I have reserved all Fridays and Saturdays of April so I can campaign for him before I give birth," Kris said.

As she cannot get on a plane because of her seven-month pregnancy, Kris said she was relying on her husband James Yap, a basketball star, to campaign for Noynoy in the Visayas.

Kris said their mother, former President Corazon Aquino, was also expected to campaign for Noynoy in the Visayas.

"I can't fly so I'm relying on my husband who knows how to speak Bisaya and my mother to campaign in the Visayas," Kris said. Yap is from Escalante, Negros Occidental

HOW DO I LOOK? GMA takes a quick look at her reflection on a breadknife during the economic briefing with the Economic Journalists Asssociation of the Philippines at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati.
EDWIN BACASMAS



JUAN BUNDOC

IT'S THEIR TURN: Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, meets with party-list Representatives Satur Ocampo and Teddy Casiño during a briefing on the human rights situation at the Batasan Pambansa on Tuesday.

UN prober 'grills' . . .

From page A1

"What is surprising is that the person making these charges has at his finger tips all the intelligence agencies of government," Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño told Alston.

"It would be so easy for them to trace how (a certain) project ended up in the hands of the rebels, how money was diverted to some other (purpose). Despite all the resources at his command, he could not (prove) even a single peso getting diverted to the so-called rebel movement," Casiño said.

Zamboanga del Norte Rep. Roseller Barinaga, the committee's vice chair, came to the party-list groups' defense, informing Alston that lawmakers merely identified projects for which the Priority Development Assistance Fund was to be spent.

Despite her group's ideological differences with the Bayan Muna bloc, Rosales said the government had no business harming "legal organizations" like Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela.

Legal groups unarmed

"If you got problems with the NPA, don't hit the legal organizations," she said. "That's unfair. These guys don't have arms."

Akbayan Rep. Loreta Ann Rosales described as "hogwash" the idea that she or her organization was fronting for the NPA.

"(The issue) is not as simple as to whether you're pro- or anticommunist," she said. "In my case, I have personally gone out of my way to denounce what I would consider as terrorist activities by the NPA. I denounce them because I'm a human rights advocate and the NPA is angry with me."

Rosales recounted one incident she exposed in Congress in which communist rebels last year burned a truck owned by former guerrillas who had given up their arms and began sugar farming on Negros island in their bid to start a new life.

Strong statements

Saying he was aware of the dispute between Akbayan and CPP founder Jose Maria Sison, Alston said Rosales' comments "seem to indicate that the NPA has been responsible for a significant number of killings."

He asked whether Rosales was leaning toward the military position that the NPA was largely to blame for the spate of extrajudicial killings. Both Rosales and her partymate Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel rejected the idea.

Saying the Akbayan lawmakers made "strong statements about definite killings by the NPA," Alston asked if they could tell how many exactly had been victimized by the communist rebels. He noted that the advocacy group Karapatan had listed about 800 victims of extrajudicial killings.

With no exact numbers to speak of, Hontiveros said her group could not accept even the idea of a minority of those in the Karapatan dying at the hands of the NPA.

"We believe that nonstate actors are also accountable," she told the UN special rapporteur. "Especially those who have inherited a proud revolutionary tradition, (they) must not degenerate to this point."

Leftwing parties 'demonized'

Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela complained to Alston that there were real efforts "to demonize" leftwing parties in the House of Representatives, linking them to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida and the Muslim terror group Abu Sayyaf.

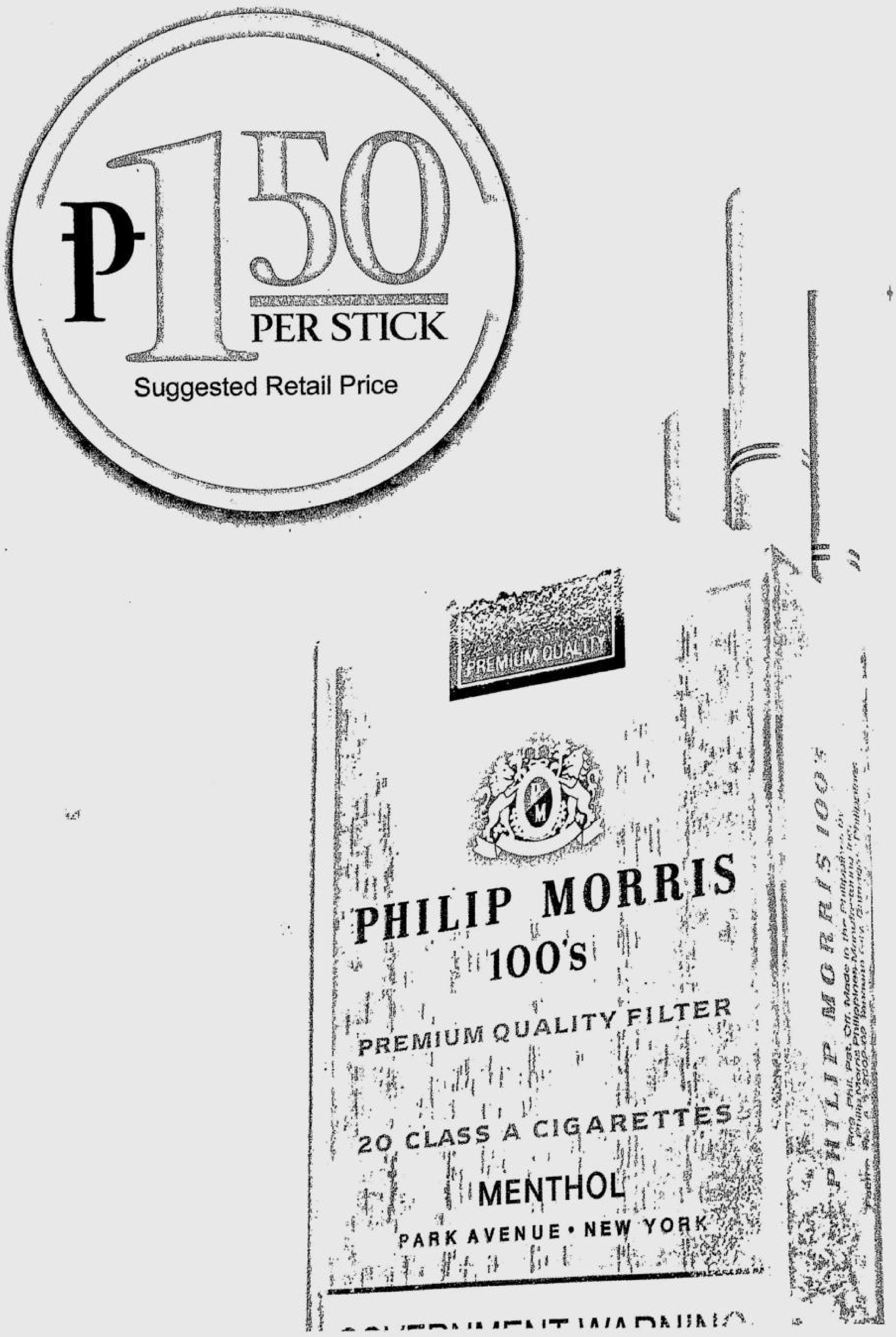
She handed Alston three posters calling her a terrorist and labelling Gabriela and other leftwing groups as "enemies of the state."

Jose Melo, 74, retired Supreme Court justice and head of a commission formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to look into political violence, has said that soldiers in the military were behind most of the murders.

'Brainwash'

"I managed to raise a number of issues that are of concern to me," Alston told reporters after his meeting with the lawmakers. "This will be reflected in the report that I will make. I think I provided opportunities for groups across the spectrums to 'brainwash' me, if that's the word for learning."

Alston was expected to give today preliminary findings after a 10-day mission in the Philippines. *With a report from Reuters*



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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 /
528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•Subscription Hotline 896-6000

A terrifying bill

EDITORIAL

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ACCOMplished a minor miracle in mustering a quorum for the special session called by President Macapagal-Arroyo. The administration is pleased with the passage of the antiterrorism bill—officially called the "Human Security Act of 2007"—which it has lobbied for since 2002. Of course, the extension of the franchise of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) was the real gravy for the lawmakers; the administration simply killed two birds with one stone. And of course, publicity-wise, it's the antiterrorism bill that's being trumpeted as the main achievement.

What has been overlooked in much of the public debate on the antiterrorism bill, which is just waiting for the President's signature to become law, is a simple principle. That principle has been adopted by only a few who have dared question the bill, but those few have been right. That principle says that there is such a thing as state terrorism. There have been many states that have used laws to justify terroristic policies and acts.

The bill as approved concentrates less on what the public has come to identify as terrorism—acts of mass murder such as the World Trade Center attack, the Bali, London and Madrid bombings—and more on punishing those who cause "widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace in order to coerce the government to give in to an unlawful demand." Notice that the law arrogates unto government both the definition of fear and panic as well as the judgment as to what constitutes coercion and unlawful demands.

A government with a track record of confusing political opposition with opposition to the state, fiscalizing with treason, criticism with subversion, protest with rebellion, does not deserve to be judge, jury and executioner in cases that don't even have tangible results.

Again, note the concern of the law: fear, and not political murder. And the failure to entertain an all-too-real possibility: if only fear is to be punished, what happens when the population ends up feeling afraid because of the government, its officials and its policies?

The antiterrorism bill aims to penalize persons who commit any of 12 crimes under the Revised Penal Code, ranging from illegal possession of firearms, to murder, rebellion, mutiny in the high seas, arson, piracy, robbery, kidnapping and serious illegal detention, and who frighten other people in the process. Under the bill, these crimes are punishable by 40 years' imprisonment without parole. A bank robbery is a crime. If people scream, it becomes terrorism?

In a recent series published in the INQUIRER, a human rights lawyer used a real-life incident from two years ago to show the limitations and dangers of the bill's approach to terrorism: A man took his wife and child hostage, threatened to harm them if the government didn't stop the demolition of his house. Panic ensued in the neighborhood. "Is that considered terrorism?" Maria Socorro Diokno asked. "Possibly yes, which is absolutely ridiculous ... [but] that is how difficult this bill is to understand."

But the bill will be all too easy to implement in a manner politically favorable to any sitting administration. The lawyers for and against any apprehension can be bogged down for years arguing the finer points of the law. Which serves the ultimate mischief this bill can cause just fine: lock the suspects up first, debate whether they should be freed, later.

We believe that the public perception of the bill is that it would provide for the punishment of people who conspire and commit acts of violence such as bombings, for political ends the conspirators publicly declare. Furthermore, additional powers could have been granted by the law insofar as surveillance and investigations (subjected to effective review by the judiciary) are concerned.

Overall, the bill should have defined terrorism in terms of actual violence, or conspiracy, supported by evidence, to commit violence. Instead it criminalizes a feeling—a feeling that is difficult to define because intangible. It has made fear so legally fearful, in a sense, that its results can only be the shrinking of our democratic space.

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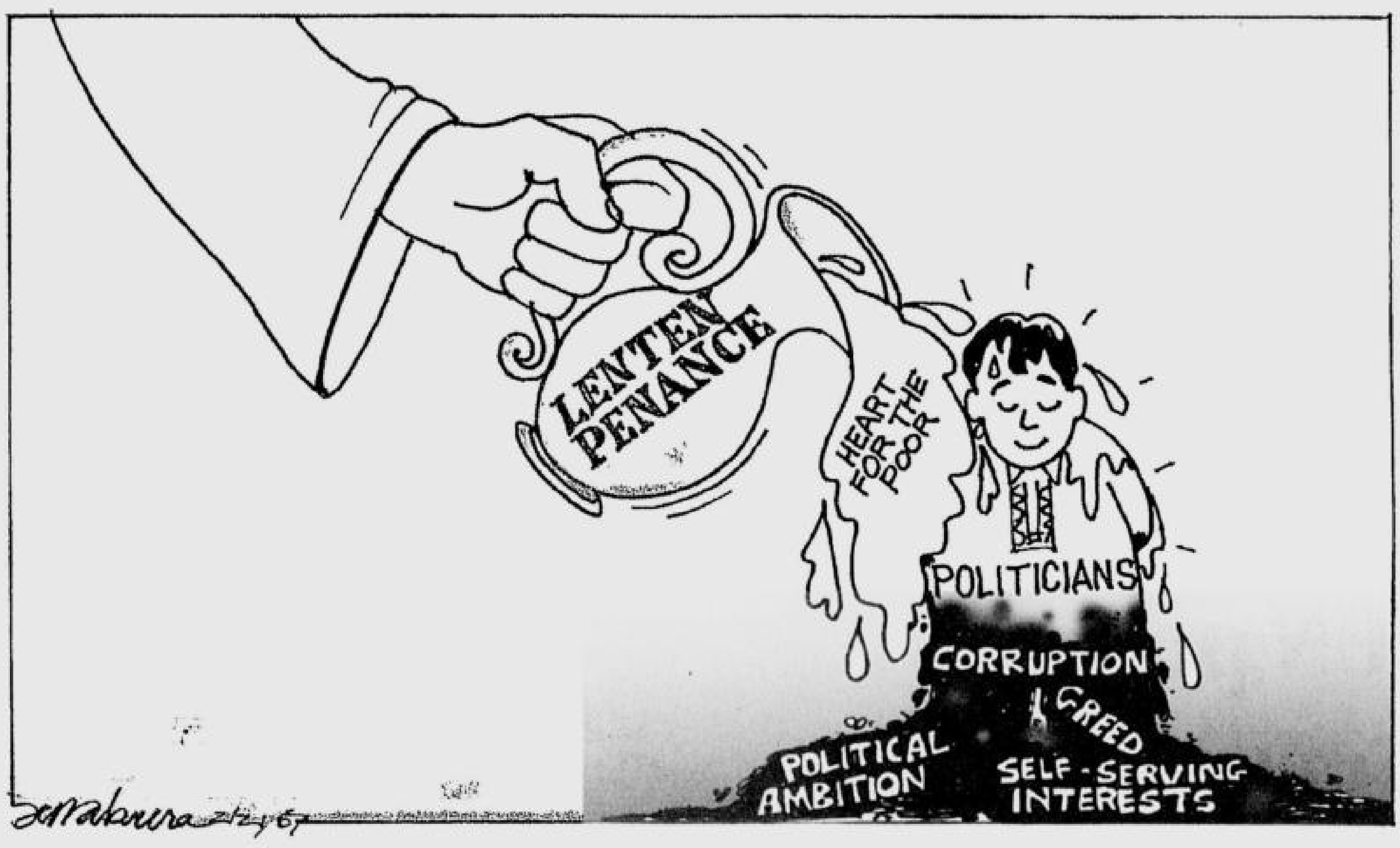


Escudero explains issues in May elections

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE GENUINE OPPOSITION (GO) SHOULD field Sorsogon Rep. Chiz Escudero to forums and gatherings more often. With a Brad Pitt haircut and always in a T-shirt that highlights his slim build, Chiz not only makes the chicks ooh and aah, he is also able to explain to the least common denominator and in language that is easy to understand the issues in the coming elections. He was a panelist at the Kapihan sa Manila last Monday (along with Sen. Alfredo Lim and Rep. Annie Rose Susano of Quezon City) and he explained what the people will have to choose this May.

Contrary to what the administration claims, the election is not a choice between former President Joseph Estrada and President Macapagal-Arroyo, he said. Neither is it a choice between administration and opposition candidates.

Before voting, people should ask themselves: Am I better off now than before GMA became President? Is the price of food now lower or higher than before? Do I get a higher pay now than before? Or do I even have a job now? Do I need more transportation money now to get where I want to go? Can I buy my children better clothes? Do I have to pay more for electricity and water?

Vote according to how you answer these questions.

If, as is obvious to everybody, except the supporters of GMA, life is harder now, then it is sensible to vote against the administration so that things would become better, Escudero said.

The administration keeps boasting that GMA has been able to improve the economy, he noted. But what good is it to the people? If the economy is better, why are more people hungry? Why do Filipinos have to go abroad to be able to get jobs? Why can't Filipinos go out to work in the morning and go home to their families in the evening just like normal human beings? Why do they have to leave their families for months and years to support them? The statistics, the GNP and GDP, may look good on paper, but the children of the poor cannot eat that paper, Escudero said.

The stock market is up, the exchange rate of the peso is up, the administration exults. But what do they mean to the common people? The operators in the stock market make a lot of money but not the people. No matter how high the stock market goes, if it does not put more food on the table of the poor, then it is nothing. The improvement in the economy is not trickling down to the poor.

The gains in the stock market and in the exchange rate are not even an achievement of the Arroyo administration. The peso rate is increasing, not because the peso is getting stronger, but because the other currencies, especially the dollar, are getting weaker, Escudero said. GMA has nothing to do with it. The stock market is going up because that is hot money being brought into the Philippines.

In fact, were it not for the blood, sweat and tears of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who regularly send home billions of dollars they worked hard for, we would have no economy to speak of, Escudero explained.

GMA is a very lucky person, he concluded. The economy is getting along all right, not because of her, but in spite of her.

We need Chiz in the Senate.

* * *

While many candidates are scrambling to get in the Senate, Sen. Alfredo Lim wants to get out. He wants to go back to his old job as mayor of Manila, the city that he served all his life, as a policeman and as city executive. The senator is running against Ali Atienza, son of Mayor Lito Atienza, and Vice Mayor Danny Lacuna.

"What can he do in Manila that Atienza has not done?" Lim was asked.

"Go after the drug pushers and prostitutes who have returned to Manila," was the quick reply. "And I will reopen Avenida Rizal and Carriedo to traffic. Business in these areas died because of the closure of these streets."

The talk eventually went to Baywalk, the crown jewel of the Atienza administration. "Before Baywalk," the senator said, "you could walk along Roxas Boulevard and watch the famous Manila Bay sunset. Now you can't see the sunset anymore. What you see are beerhouses lining the seaside. Baywalk is just one long, well-lighted bar."

What he wants to do, the former mayor said, is develop a bayside park along North Harbor where many of Manila's very poor live. "The people here cannot go to the Luneta because they have to take transportation to get there. With that park, all they have to do is walk there," he said.

His original plan when he was mayor, Lim said, was to have a beach of white sand off what is Baywalk now, Lim said, so that people can walk in the sand and wet their feet in the sea. For a city by the bay, Manila doesn't even have a beach. Even the beaches of Parañaque and Las Piñas are gone. The nearest beaches are in Cavite, Laguna and Batangas.

Tourists in Manila have to fly to Boracay, Palawan, Cebu, Bohol and other provinces to sample the beaches of the Philippines, whereas in Hawaii, Miami, Acapulco and other places, they just go down their hotels and the beaches are right there, Lim said.

* * *

Susano, for her part, wants to erase the image of Quezon City as the "squatter capital of the Philippines." Her district, Novaliches, is the biggest and the most populous in the Philippines. It also has the most squatters.

Susano thinks there is enough space in Quezon City for medium-rise condominiums for squatters. With enough determination and muscle power to prevent the entry of new squatters, she thinks squatting can be eradicated. For the country's richest city (with more than P2 billion deposited in banks), money is no problem. But all that money is no good if it is kept in the banks and not used for the benefit of the people.

Courage

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT TEAM UNIty opened its campaign in Cebu last weekend, to much fanfare and confetti, several relative unknowns were going quietly about their business, apprising anyone interested enough to listen about their senatorial bids. Such a one was Martin Bautista, who shook hands with fellow shoppers at the Greenhills *tiangge* and told them that he was running. He is one of three doing so under the banner of Kapatiran, the anti-*trapo* party, and if by some miracle he does make it, he says, he plans to abolish the pork barrel, uplift the lot of the poor and bring back decency to government.

The knee-jerk reaction to something like this is to be polite and say aloud, "Ah, yes, that is a very good idea," but to think privately, "What a bunch of losers." On the face of it, and compared to the lineups of Team Unity, GO and the various *mestizo* coalitions, Bautista and company seem no better or worse than the nuisance candidates the Comelec routinely weeds out of the garden before they can threaten to sprout. Candidates who either have batty agendas or who have no chance of winning. Though as I've written before, in this topsy-turvy Alice-in-Wonderland country the batty agendas of the "nuisance" candidates are often worlds saner than the presumably rational ones of the "serious" candidates. I mean, who is more believable, an unemployed man who says he will spread love, peace and music to this land or a GMA minion who says he will bring justice, truth and freedom?

But to see people like Bautista as "losers" is precisely the kind of knee-jerk reaction that has wrecked the knees of this country and reduced it to a cripple groping blindly in the dark. Look at Bautista and company's credentials and see if the wannabes in the administration and opposition tickets, individually or collectively, can hold up a candle to them. Bautista is a doctor who has worked in New York and Oklahoma for the last 17 years, who never applied for a green card, and who left a job most Filipino doctors can only dream about (they don't even mind turning into nurses). "Life is short," he says. "Better spend it doing something good for your country."

His two other confreres in Kapatiran have equally sterling credentials. Adrian Sison is one of the country's top lawyers. And Zozimo Paredes was the executive director of the presidential commission monitoring the implementation of the VFA who resigned his post in disgust over the Malacañang-sanctioned springing of Daniel Smith from the Makati jail. How many of our candidates today have shown that kind of *malasakit*, or compassion, for the country?

I grant that the burden does not completely lie with the voters. People who present themselves to the voters have the obligation to do so in as pleasing a way as possible, short of resorting to singing and dancing, notably to tunes that reduce this exceptionally musically gifted country to the status of a retardate. They have the obligation as well to shout their heads off and be heard, to try and raise the money to advertise themselves, short of stealing or selling their souls to the devil or Fortress Trapo, whichever is worse, and not just sit back and trust in the intelligence of the Filipino voter. It's good to trust in God, if you are a believer, but as we all know, God helps those who help themselves. That is true as well of the God of elections, who is the Filipino voter. (Of course, GMA has been known to mistake Garci for the voter as the God of elections, but that is another story.)

But the even bigger burden of responsibility lies with us, the public. To this day, I find truly reprehensible that concept of "winnability." At the very least, it brings out the worst in us, driving us to vote for a candidate just because others are doing so, in the same way that lemmings throw themselves off a cliff just because others are doing so. At the very most, it robs us of a power we hold in our hands. That power is the vote. What makes a candidate "winnable" is not something he possesses, it is something we do. We vote for a candidate, he wins. We do not vote for him, he loses. It's as simple as that. At least barring God or Garci.

Over the last couple of decades, I've supported candidates who I've thought were good for the country. Few of them won. Certainly neither of the presidential candidates I supported did: Jovito Salonga in 1992 and Raul Roco in 1998 and 2004. I've never regretted it. I've never felt I lost because of it. On the contrary, I've always thought it was the people who voted for the "winnable" candidate that lost, and lost big. Look at where the country is now.

In this country, the greatest courage is not shown in the face of the direst danger, it is shown in the face of the slightest ridicule. I've seen people risk their lives to fight tyranny but balk at endorsing "marginal" candidates, or candidates who are principled but "unwinnable," for fear of becoming an object of scorn or laughter. Or for fear of being called naïve or simpleminded. What, it's sophisticated to vote for an entertainer turned ersatz politician because he or she is popular? It's brilliant to deliver this country into the hands of wheeler-dealers and/or downright crooks because they smell of money? Scorn away and laugh away, but *I* personally feel that when I endorse people like Martin Bautista, *I* win. And the country wins with me.

I wish I could say that he who laughs last laughs loudest. But I don't know that the "unwinnable" candidates will win now, or ever. One thing I do know with absolute certainty and which applies to those who will vote for the "winnable" *trapo* and entertainer this May:

He who laughs first weeps longest.

Senate no longer a springboard to presidency

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE DAYS OF THE PHILIPPINE SENATE AS THE springboard to the presidency are numbered. The May 2007 elections will determine the validity of the conventional wisdom that senators have a natural right to the presidency because they have a "national constituency" that puts them on equal footing with the President of the Republic.

Senators have come to believe that because they are elected at large, they are "presidents in waiting." This explains why there has always been a scramble for inclusion in senatorial tickets in past elections.

President Manuel L. Quezon started the precedent in 1916, when under the Jones Law, the unicameral legislature was transformed into two chambers. Quezon was elected the first Filipino Senate president in the evolving experiment on self-government. Quezon's election as Senate president represented his triumph over Speaker Sergio Osmeña of the unicameral legislature in their rivalry for dominance in Philippine politics. The Speaker then was the most powerful Filipino official, since the legislature was the people's assembly and the upper body was the Philippine Commission controlled by the American colonial administration.

Thus, the establishment of the Senate marked the emergence of an autonomous all-Filipino legislature, and a historical benchmark for the development of a powerful counterfoil to the presidency. After Quezon, the Senate presidency has been fiercely coveted and contested as the shortest route to the presidency, aside from the vice presidency.

Senate President Manuel A. Roxas mounted his challenge for the presidency against Vice President Sergio Osmeña in 1946. Senate President Ferdinand Marcos successfully challenged President Diosdado Macapagal in the 1965 election from the Senate podium.

Since Quezon, a number of senators have launched presidential bids, using the Senate as their platforms. Although most have not been successful, senators have always believed that because they are in the Senate that puts them in line for recruitment to the presidency.

From 1916 until the replacement of the bicameral legislature by the unicameral National Assembly in 1935 (a scheme of Quezon), senators were elected according to senatorial districts, numbering 16 and representing regional constituencies and political bases. Despite this regional delineation, the notion gained currency that the Senate was a forum where national problems were debated by the "best and the brightest" of these regional representatives. The idea was that the Senate was the assembly of elected elder statesmen whose vision transcended parochial interests articulated by the members of the House of Representatives. This concept worked and did produce statesmen and heavyweight presidential timber, until "something funny happened on the way to the forum."

Despite the regular replenishment of presidential aspirants in the Senate, other routes to Malacañang have opened, bypassing the Senate. Ramon Magsaysay sprang from the House, powered by his war record as guerrilla leader, to become a spectacular defense secretary who broke the back of the Huk rebellion. From his Cabinet base, Magsaysay routed President Elpidio Quirino in the 1953 election.

Diosdado Macapagal leapfrogged from the House to become vice president and went on to defeat Carlos P. Garcia in 1961. In 1994, Fidel Ramos took the presidency on the back of a nonlegislative platform, which was the Edsa people power constituency. In 1998, Vice President Joseph Estrada stormed into the presidency on the wave of a constituency based on show business, in a sweep that had nothing to do with his undistinguished record in the Senate.

All this has diminished the Senate as the traditional pathway to the presidency.

In the scramble for slots on the senatorial tickets of the Genuine Opposition (GO) and Team Unity for the May election, senators and ex-senators, using their Senate background as credentials for election, are overrepresented as a recruitment category. Their Senate background is not a red-hot vote-getting asset anymore. There is no reason to believe that they are sure winners.

Even the value of the Senate and the Senate presidency as a short-cut to the presidency is uncertain. The performance of the Senate over the past few years has highlighted its investigative function, overshadowing its task as a consensus-building body on policy. It is a chamber of undisciplined members acting separately, not guided by party platforms, although nominally members claim party membership (such as the LDP, PDP-Laban, Liberal Party and Nacionalista Party). In voting on issues, senators have voted as individuals, claiming "independence." They can't even be categorized as pro-administration or anti-administration. On any issue, the vote is widely splintered by as many separate opinions as there are senators. With such fragmentation, no one in the present Senate, including re-electionists, can claim to speak on behalf of, or to represent, any constituency.

This individualistic splintering is reflected in the senatorial tickets whose candidates have been recruited from a medley of sectors and who do not represent a national constituency. When the next Senate is elected from this broad spectrum of disparate constituencies, none of its members can claim a vested right to be president on the grounds that he or she has been elected at large on the same basis as the president.

This is a spurious and delusional claim. The election results will show the extent of the erosion of the Senate as a recruitment ground for the presidency.

Looking after the women

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ON AVERAGE, SOME 200 BABIES ARE BORN EVery week at the East Avenue Medical Center (EAMC), a hospital that's considered "the PGH of Quezon City" and the rest of northern Metro Manila. This record, however, pales beside that of the Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital in Sta. Cruz, Manila, considered the prime maternity hospital in the country, where some 90 babies are born every day, a total of 630 babies a week.

To illustrate, Dr. Walfrido Sumpaico, chair of the EAMC obstetrics and gynecology department, swings open the door to the labor room of the maternity ward to show a room filled with about 12 beds where women are writhing and breathing heavily. A few steps away, Dr. Sumpaico again swings open a door to the post-delivery room where about the same number of women are leaning over their babies, or else lying back in what appears to be utter exhaustion.

Because they are both government hospitals and draw women from the poorest sectors (though the majority of poor women still deliver at home, cared for by midwives or *hilots*), an idea was floated recently to merge the services of both Fabella and EAMC into a "New Women's Medical Center" to be located in the Lung Center. But protests from Lung Center staff and staff of both hospitals have in the meantime led to the shelving of the idea. Still, the women keep coming to both hospitals, bringing with them not just babies about to pop out of their mothers, but also obstetrical and gynecological problems, including cancers of the reproductive tract as well as infections and fertility complications.

* * *

I HAD been invited to give an inspirational talk at the blessing of three new facilities in the EAMC Ob-Gyn department: the EAMC-Storz Gynecologic Endoscopy Institute, the Colposcopy Clinic and the Infectious Disease Clinic. The new equipment and facilities, including a brightly lit, colorful and squeaky clean maternity ward, bring the most advanced medical developments within reach of poor women, said Dr. Sumpaico.

But, he added, "everything is not all roses." According to statistics gathered by the staff, he said, "from 50 to 80 percent of our patients had no pre-natal care at all." The challenge confronting the EAMC staff, then, is not just to cope with the health problems of their patients, but also to ensure that they adopt health practices that will lower their risks overall and that they enjoy access to basic health care, including pre-natal care.

Dr. Roland Cortez, hospital chief of EAMC, pointed out that the new facilities, including a new colposcopy machine and an endoscope, on loan from Karl Storz of Germany, is the hospital's way of "innovating on our own, given the minimal support we can expect (from the national government) to upgrade our equipment and facilities."

Among the innovative approaches being employed are profit-sharing schemes, as well as build-operate-transfer agreements with suppliers of medical equipment and supplies. For instance, said Dr. Sumpaico, the 4-D ultrasound machine is being used according to a profit-sharing scheme that "the hospital could not afford otherwise" but brings the benefits of the latest technology to poor women.

* * *

THE EQUIPMENT at the Colposcopy Clinic allows doctors at EAMC to detect cancerous and pre-cancerous lesions that may lead to cervical cancer, one of the more common cancers of women in the country and which kills more Filipino women each year than breast cancer.

The Gynecologic Endoscopy Institute, meanwhile, will allow surgeons to perform minimally invasive procedures, with the use of miniature probes that allow doctors to view a woman's internal organs through a monitor.

Meanwhile, the EAMC Reproductive Infectious Disease Clinic offers screening and diagnosis for various infections, including Hepatitis-B and sexually transmitted infections, that will no longer require a return visit for the results, but will have the results ready "while you wait." Minimally priced, kits for performing the various laboratory tests are also available to other doctors who can perform them in their own clinics.

The chief of the Division of Gynecology at EAMC, by the way, is my brother-in-law, Dr. German Tan-Cardoso.

* * *

BUT, as I pointed out in my talk, all these new equipment, technology and scientific advancements lie at the end of a long process of inculturation, as well as poor health practices, that bring the women to EAMC in the first place.

The battle being waged at EAMC is not just against cervical cancer, reproductive tract infections or unsafe motherhood, but also against cultural norms that make women vulnerable to poor health. We are fighting not just disease but also imposed ignorance, especially on young people, regarding sexuality and reproduction. We are fighting prejudice and squeamishness, prejudice against women's sexuality that leads to squeamishness about the genital area that results in reluctance to come for treatment for genital infections and gynecological problems. And of course there is self-deception and denial, with women placing a very low priority on their own health needs and postponing treatment for as long as they can, in denial of their mortality and the risks they face.

I must add here, too, my gratitude to all the doctors and health professionals not just at the EAMC but in every hospital, clinic, health center and community in this country. Thank you not just for being in the medical field, but for staying in this country. It would be so easy—and understandable—to seek a better life elsewhere, which is why choosing to stay here and serve the poorest of the poor is an act of heroism in itself.

History from a Filipino viewpoint

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

ON THE EVENING OF FEB. 4, 1899, IN A DARK part of what is now Sta. Mesa, Manila, a group of American soldiers manning a checkpoint challenged Filipino soldiers coming their way with the order: "Halt!" The Filipinos did not stop and replied: "Alto!"

Nervous, the Americans shouted the warning a second time, "Halt!" and got the same reply twice, "Alto! Alto!"

Given this provocation and following standard procedure, the American soldier fired. It was not a warning shot. A Filipino fell and became the first statistic of what we now remember as the Philippine-American War.

When learned about this historical event in school, it never crossed my mind to make life difficult for my teachers by asking, how come we knew the name and rank of Private Willie Grayson, who fired the first shot that triggered the Philippine-American War, but not the name of the Filipino who was the first casualty of this long and costly war? Is this order of things the result of our having a history written by the victors, in this case the Americans? Should our history a century since continue along the same American story line?

When do we view history from a Filipino viewpoint? While we cannot turn back the hands of time, we can at least revisit the events of that day and ask whether the Filipino who was shot understood the order to halt. For all we know, he mistook it as a greeting and when he shouted back "Alto!" he probably did so with a smile and a wave of his hand.

I was in UP Baguio recently to participate in a forum organized by the Philippine Historical Association, under its energetic president, Dr. Celestina Boncan, to revisit the early generals of the Philippine Revolution and the Philippine-American War. I was half-hoping that the audience would include cadets of the Philippine Military Academy, to supplement their military history.

Some PMA alumni told me they were taught about Western wars, both ancient and modern, but not much about wars fought in our backyard. Do PMA cadets know the battle plans of Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo as well as they know those of Julius Caesar, Hannibal or Douglas MacArthur?

Textbook Philippine history tell us the outcome of major battles, but it rarely goes into the details to let a student know how these were fought, if only to emphasize the valor and fortitude of our heroes. Then, of course, Filipino schoolchildren don't learn much about heroines. Five historians covered five generals in one day: Gregorio del Pilar by Dr. Ricardo T. Jose, Antonio Luna by Dr. Estrellita Muhi, Vicente Lukban by Dr. Reynaldo Imperial, Macario Sakay by Dr. Boncan and Luciano San Miguel by Dr. Cesar Pobre. We hope that the seminar can be brought to other places or the papers published so that we can begin to learn more about the battles that made the Philippines, rightly or wrongly, what it is today.

This seminar made me realize that February has so many historical events overshadowed by Valentine's Day and, this year, by the Chinese New Year and Ash Wednesday. We have: the start of the Philippine-American War in 1899, the Battle for Manila in 1945 and the Edsa Revolution of 1986. What about the execution of Gomburza in 1872 or the completion of the "Noli Me Tangere" in 1887? So many things to remember, so little time and attention span.

I was reminded that for a long time the Filipino armed resistance to American rule in the early 20th century was described as an insurrection. As a matter of fact, the first stop for any research on the period is a collection of documents compiled, transcribed and translated from the original languages and annotated by an American, Capt. J.R.M. Taylor. This five-volume set was suppressed immediately after it was completed and only saw print in 1971 when Renato Constantino, curator of the Lopez Museum, suggested it as the first publication of the Eugenio Lopez Foundation. These thick volumes are bound in blue with gold letters that spell out the title "The Philippine Insurrection Against the United States."

Taylor had worked on a selection of documents from a large archive known to researchers as the "P.I.R." (for "Philippine Insurgent Records"). An insurrection, which is defined as "rising in open resistance to established authority; a rebellion," is different from a war, which is an armed conflict between nations. Thus, if we follow the Philippine version of history, we note that the Filipinos declared their independence from Spain on June 12, 1898 and established a Republic in Malolos in 1899, complete with a Congress and a Constitution. We were, at least in form, a free and independent nation, so that when the first shot was fired in Manila on Feb. 4, 1899, we did not merely launch an insurrection against the United States, but rather the United States was at war with the short-lived First Philippine Republic.

The "P.I.R." preserved in our National Library is now known as the Philippine Revolutionary Records (P.R.R.). In 1998, the US Library of Congress changed its subject classification from "Philippine Insurrection" to "Philippine-American War." These seemingly small changes are not meant to reopen old wounds but rather to attain and develop perspective, dignity and nationalism from our history.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Unfinished business

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

AS I WRITE THIS COLUMN, CONGRESS WILL BE CONVENing for the second day of a special session in an attempt to pass a few more bills. This Congress will probably go down in history as one of the most unproductive, given how much time it wasted on political maneuverings. It doesn't help that it's now using the special session to ram through some of the administration's controversial priority bills.

One of these bills was the antiterrorism bill, which was approved on Monday. Its passage prompted Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye to heap praises on Congress, saying the bill was part of the country's commitment to the international community as well as an "imperative for a society of law and order that can sustain economic growth and posterity."

Bayan and other militant groups were less enthusiastic. Bayan has already announced it will go to the Supreme Court once the bill is signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Fear's clouds

The fear many human rights groups have is that the bill has too wide a definition of "terrorism" and that this might be used indiscriminately. Terrorism is described in the bill as "sowing and creating a condition of widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace in order to coerce the government to give in to an unlawful demand." The bill allows authorities to detain suspects for three days without a court warrant or the filing of formal charges. It also authorizes surveillance through wiretapping, examination of bank records and a ban on organizations seen as terrorist.

In fairness to Congress, it did modify the original version, which would have allowed up to a month of detention without warrant. There are also provisions for compensation of people who are "wrongly arrested."

The days of the dictatorship may be over, but there's still good reason to be worried about the bill, given the current administration's flirtation with authoritarianism. Political assassinations of leaders of militant organizations, often labeled as "terrorist" by officials of the Arroyo administration, continue unabated. The day the antiterrorism bill was passed, another journalist was killed in Cotabato, the 110th since democracy was restored to the Philippines in 1986.

It hasn't helped that the President and her spokesmen have been so cavalier about these killings. Initially, they issued outright denials of any government complicity. Then when international pressure began, the President created an investigative committee headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo. The Melo report is out now, but the administration refuses to release it to the public.

All this takes us back to the reservations about the antiterrorism bill. Put briefly, the fear of the bill is a fear of state terrorism.

Discipline

The administration rightly calculated that the bill would pass without too much public opposition. Our culture emphasizes authority, even the use of force in the name of discipline. Remember Marcos and martial law, and his slogan, "*Sa ikauunlad ng bayan, disiplina ang kailangan*"? It seems to have a taken a new life with Bunye's pronouncements on the antiterrorism bill sustaining prosperity.

But we've seen, too, what happens when the disciplinarians can't discipline themselves, and end up abusing their power.

Think now of how terrorism already permeates our daily lives, even if in subtle ways. How many of you have found yourself driving, and skipping a heartbeat when a policeman, or a traffic aide, raises his or her arm, only to sigh with relief when you realize you're not being flagged down? But we respond that way because so many of us have in fact have been flagged down even when we didn't violate any traffic rule. Some of us may be fortunate in being able to defend ourselves but your average citizen, innocent or guilty, will just pay up to be able to get on with his life.

Ah, but that's extortion, you may argue. But then isn't state terrorism extortion? Kidnappings and disappearances, arrests and detentions, torture and salvaging—all these are extortion, too, in the way they intimidate people, telling us that there is no rule of law except that of state power, that of national security.

I've seen such terrorism in urban slums and rural areas, with checkpoints and raids. I wrote, some months back, about a hapless man who was picked up by the police, without a warrant, in his home in one of Quezon City's many slum areas, supposedly for vandalizing someone's car. It turned out the accuser just had a grudge against him, and connived with the police to have him roughed up and, hopefully, to extort some money. Relatives approached me and we were able to get advice from the UP Legal Office. As soon as the police realized legal advice was coming in, they retreated.

But I feel uncomfortable when I have to intervene this way, because it reduces justice to power play. I know, too, that ultimately, all the connections one has will not match the vindictiveness of state terrorists. UP itself has lost students to state terrorism, the most recent incident taking place only a few months ago when two activist students disappeared while doing field work.

International covenant

The passage of the antiterrorism bill leaves us with unfinished business in the months ahead, whether through challenges before the Supreme Court, as well as more human rights education so citizens can better protect themselves.

And even as the specter of the new law is upon us, we should be giving attention to still another "To Do": tackling a new International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Article 2 of the new convention reads: "For the purposes of this Convention, 'enforced disappearance' is considered to be the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the state, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law."

The convention criminalizes the practice of enforced disappearances, whether during times of war or peace. It also seeks to prevent these disappearances by prohibiting secret places of detention and recognizing the right to reparation and disclosure for victims and their families.

The international convention reminds us we need to be protected as well from state terrorism. Last Feb. 6, 57 countries acceded to the the new international agreement. Most of these countries will still need to get their legislative bodies to ratify the treaty. Once 20 countries do this, the international agreement will come into force.

Conspicuously absent from among the initial signatories were several developed countries, particularly the United States, which has come under fire for its lack of transparency about detention of suspected Islamists. Also absent was the Philippines.

Thanks for the good news

I READ THE NEWS REPORTS "RP now international test center (INQUIRER, 2/10/07) and "RP to provide security for US nurses' test here" (INQUIRER, 2/11/07) with ambivalent feelings of admiration and deep concern.

According to the reports, the decision of the NCSBN (Nursing Council of the State Board of Nursing) making the Philippines one of the testing sites for the NCLEX-CAT (Nursing Council Licensing Examination-Computerized Adaptive Testing), means the leakage issue is finally over and it's time to move forward. The reports also said that the Philippines has been cleansed of the stigma of the nursing leakage scandal.

However, the same reports said that the CGFNS (Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools) cannot yet approve the application of the passers of the local June 2006 nursing board exams for VisaScreen certificates.

Good news and bad news.

The CGFNS is the very same institution commissioned by the federal government to issue the VisaScreen. This certificate is crucial, one of the many mandatory requirements for the issuance of a nursing visa. In short, what good will it do for our June 2006 passers to successfully pass all the mandated competency examinations, when at the end of the day they will not be able to secure a US visa?

Nevertheless, may I extend my warmest congratulations and utmost admiration to all the dedicated leaders and nursing professionals involved in successfully lobbying for the NCLEX-CAT to be held here in our country. This is undoubtedly a milestone in the history of Philippine nursing, thanks to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Philippine Nurses Association and Philippine Nurses Association-America).

My gratitude and appreciation to the NCSBN, too, for remaining fair, objective and reasonable despite the leakage issue.

—RUSTY L. FRANCISCO,
EdD, RNC, CNAA,
chief operating officer,
NC-CLEX Review
and Training Center,
docrusty@ncclex.com

SCTEX project: answers to questions

I WRITE IN RESPONSE TO THE letter of Fred Roxas concerning what he referred to as "unusual goings-on at the construction site of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway [SCTEX]." (INQUIRER, 2/15/07)

He advised former SBMA Chair Felicito C. Payumo, who seems to be taking up the cudgels for the farmers in the Landbank and right of way issue, to dig deeper because:

1. The farmers have reportedly been paid and their lots already sold. This explains why they no longer have in their possession the CLOAs, and that Payumo should know who is holding them.

I have news for Roxas. The farmers (or the person to whom they gave their special power of attorney) have not been paid a single centavo by the BCDA, despite their having allowed the BCDA and its contractor entry to the property more than two and a half years ago. An MOA was signed in good faith with the BCDA, to allow construction on the site while payment was supposedly being processed. But how much longer must they wait? The fact is BCDA has not paid, to this day, a single centavo for the land. That is the heart of the issue which the BCDA, through Roxas, skirts.

2. Roxas asks: Who is holding the CLOAs? This is a non-issue. But if he wants to know, it is the holder of the SPA, of course. The CLOAs will be surrendered only when the BCDA pays.

3. Roxas asks: Who is the mysterious buyer or the SPA holder? I have news for him: there is no buyer yet since the farmers have to observe the required 10-year holding period. If they have sought financial assistance elsewhere to pay the Landbank, that is within their rights. Must the BCDA and Roxas begrudge them that? Another non-issue.

4. Roxas asks: if the farmers are really victims, why aren't they complaining? They are not even sore at the BCDA or anyone. Is Roxas or his informant from the BCDA serious? If they really believe that no one gets sore waiting two and a half years for his payment, after his crop had been destroyed and his fruit trees cut down, then the BCDA officialdom is in trouble.

Don't the officials know that there are 24 farmer-beneficiaries in Porac (five in Barangay Jalung, four in Pio, seven in Babo Pangulo, 8 in Planas), seven in San Jose, Floridablanca, and five in Bataan, who have pending claims for payment because of Landbank-related issues? They put up fences more frequently in Pampanga but Gen. Robert Gervacio, SCTEX program manager, is quick to send down his troops to remove the obstructions. Sure, they haven't resisted because the troopers are armed. Must some of them get himself hurt to show that they are sore?

If Roxas doesn't know it yet, the Landbank and BCDA are already meeting continuously to resolve the legal issue over which the farmers have nothing to do. It just shows that given the resolve of both sides, a breakthrough might yet be found without the farmers having to wait for the Court to decide on the just compensation case filed by the original landowner.

—ROMY MEDINA,
Biniktican, Subic Bay Freeport

Circus characters in 2007 elections

MY FAVORITE NEWSPAPER APpropriately titled the event of the day in its headline "Circus comes to town." (INQUIRER, 2/13/07) The eye-catching and attention-grabbing headline is absolutely right in calling the event the greatest show because many of its performers are portraying circus characters.

They are the famous gambler S, the loquacious E, the big mouth C, the trying-hard dancer O, the veggie P, the rebel T, the chameleons A, P, R and V, the homosexual O, the harmless A, the comebacking NC and TS, the born loser KP and the do or die L.

Yes, the circus is in our midst now. Its performers amuse us with their antics and brouhaha at the expense of our ailing economy. But it also pesters us with TV commercials that disrupt our viewing pleasure. Moreover, it creates public eyesores with its oversized posters and it litters our streets with leaflets, and it even defaces walls and destroys the pristine loveliness of our trees.

From among the famous, not-so-famous and never-heard senatorial candidates, we will choose lawmakers. Let us be wise and circumspect in voting them. Let us not adhere to the culture of Kamag-anak Inc., *utang na loob, pakikisama* and *kahihiyan* systems and the other old Filipino traditions of voting. Remember, there are no idiot leaders where there are no idiot voters.

—VIC J. COLUMNA,
vicjcolumna@com.ph.

KEEP OUR RICE
GMO FREE
GREENPEACE

GREENPEACE activists air concerns about GE rice INQUIRER PHOTO

NFA monitoring sale of GE rice in RP supermarkets

THIS IS IN REACTION TO RINA Jimenez-David's column titled "The Cardinal writes the President." (INQUIRER, 2/16/07)

We at the National Food Authority have been informed that as part of its social responsibility, Purefeeds, the supplier of Uncle Sam Texas Long Grain Rice, has already pulled out its stocks from supermarkets and other outlets. After inspection, the NFA has verified that no Uncle Sam Texas Long Grain Rice was found in the following supermarkets: Ever Gotesco Commonwealth; SM Cubao; Shopwise Cubao; Rustan Cubao; Unimart Greenhills; Eunilane Foodmart, Kalayaan; Puregold Cubao, Hypermarket SM North Edsa; Rustan's Makati; Hi-Top Supermarket, Quezon Avenue; Cherry Foodarama, Congressional; Robinson Fairview and SM Fairview.

Let the public be informed that, last year, when Greenpeace (through Daniel Ocampo) told us about the alleged contamination, we immediately referred the matter to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) for a thorough examination of any trace of LL601

The BPI is the agency responsible for checking the GM (genetically modified) contents of imported products, particularly those commodities known to be commercially grown in other countries. Unlike the NFA, BPI is equipped with laboratory facilities needed for this purpose.

While we are mandated to ensure food security at all times, we are also aware of our duty to make sure that the food coming from us is fit for human consumption. The NFA has consulted with Greenpeace, and we have been informed that during the latter part of 2006, LL601 rice was deregulated in the United States and considered safe for both human consumption and animal feed. We shared this information with Greenpeace in a letter dated Feb. 7, 2007. Greenpeace demanded that the NFA pull out the rice stocks from supermarkets but on its own, the NFA cannot unilaterally recall the stocks without BPI's test results as basis.

Before this, the Philippine government sent experts from various regulatory agencies to monitor, evaluate and test rice stocks imported under the US PL480.

No US rice arrived in 2006 under PL480 in the country because at least two public biddings regarding the importation of US rice have failed due to the stringent requirements being imposed by the Philippine government on genetically engineered rice.

We assure the public that the NFA will continue to monitor and ensure that GM rice will be pulled out from the market.

—REX C. ESTOPEREZ,
director, Public Affairs,
National Food Authority,
Diliman, Quezon City

Koko ran for mayor of Cagayan de Oro just once

THE COLUMN OF ISAGANI CRUZ last Feb. 11 alluded to Koko Pimentel as twice a mayoral candidate of Cagayan de Oro City. The Jan. 20 column of Belinda Olivares-Cunanan gave the same wrong information.

Koko ran for mayor of Cagayan de Oro in the 2001 elections with only a 25-percent chance of beating Mayor Vicente Emano because no one from the PDP-Laban in that city wanted to challenge the reelectionist mayor.

Of course, he got more than 25 percent of the votes (mostly from the religious and educated sectors) in what many considered was a no-win situation for him. He never ran after that.

—ELENI FRANCESCA,
3 Mary Grace St.,
Metro Heights,
Sanville, Quezon City

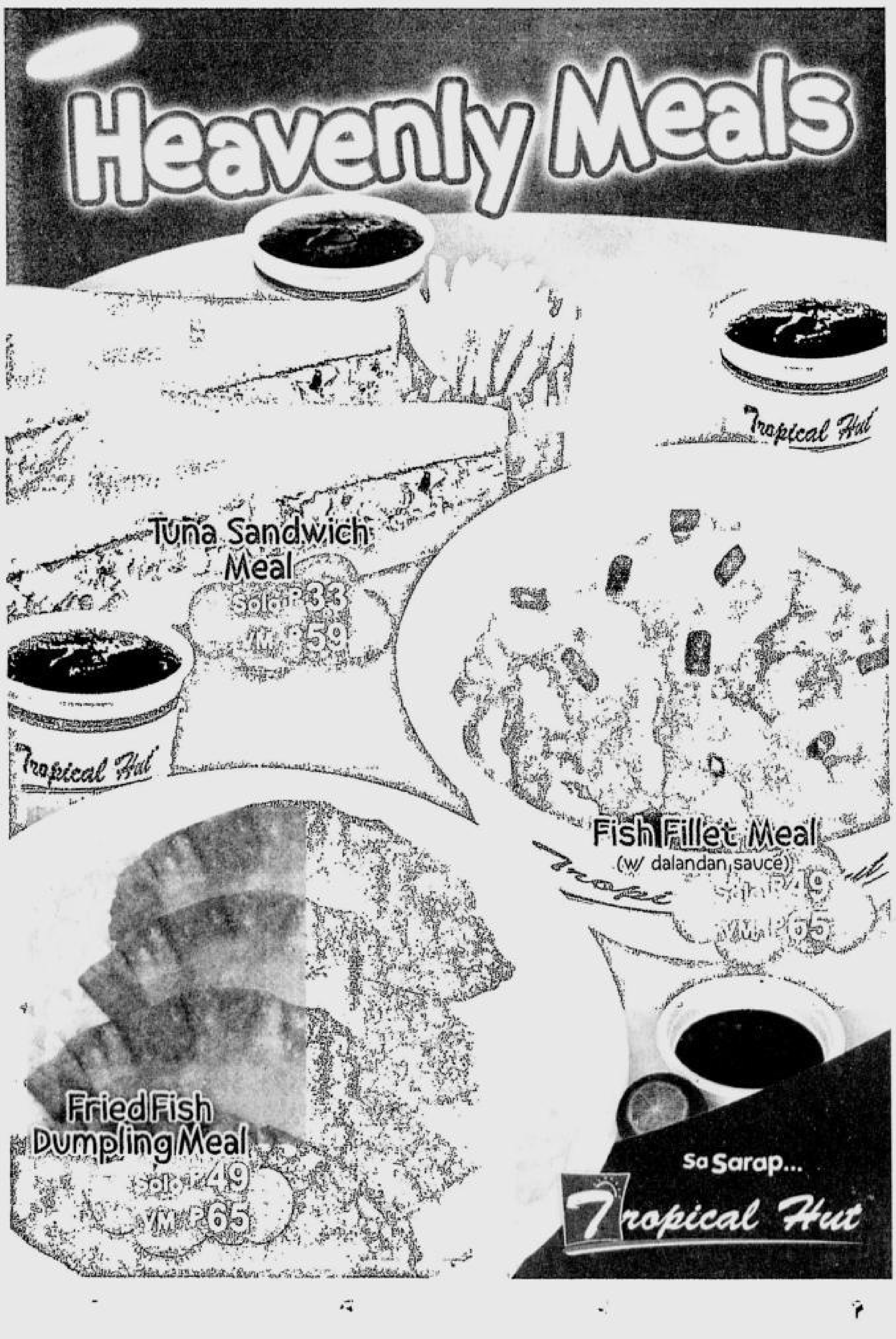
'Streaming' should start in primary school

MICHAEL TAN CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED what college education means for us Pinoys. (INQUIRER, 2/2/07) I agree that "streaming" may help students pick the right course of study. But streaming should not start when they are about to take their college entrance tests; it should start when they are in primary school. Parents and teachers play a big role in this since they know best the ability and talent of their children. Appropriate tests can be used at any level of education to stream students and properly advise and orient parents.

Courses of study should be made more flexible to accommodate the students' abilities and talents. In some Australian universities, students are allowed to choose "streams" of studies similar to the majors and minors in American universities. Many Philippine universities have done away with majors and minors in courses of studies. While students are allowed electives, the truth is, there are often few courses to choose from. A move toward a wider choice for students is now being made by the University of the Philippines in its Revised General Education Program (RGEP).

While Tan says that streaming may discriminate against "late bloomers," the right tests may determine who these people are and specify appropriate support structures and services. Many late bloomers often take a job and go back to school, oftentimes with young families to care. Our society often stereotypes these mature-age and working college students. Our universities do not have enough support structures and services for them. This is where US, Australian and European universities may have something to contribute. From my teaching experience, working students often have a higher stake in their education than their peers who depend solely on parental support.

—BENJAMIN VALLEJO JR., Ph.D.,
visiting professor, Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge 70803, Louisiana, USA



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'Change of heart' a tall order for politicians

By Nikko Dizon

ASH WEDNESDAY, THE START of the Lenten season for Catholics, falls within the election campaign season and should mean something for the country's politicians.

"Ash Wednesday signifies a Catholic's desire for conversion, a change of heart," Fr. Genaro Diwa told reporters on Monday.

"When we observe Ash Wednesday, we are admitting that we are ready to repair whatever damage we have done in our relationship with God and with others," said Diwa, who heads the Ministry for Liturgical Affairs of the Archdiocese of Manila.

This could be a tall order for politicians, especially those seeking elective posts in the May midterm elections, the Rome-educated priest conceded.

"A change of heart," he said, "would demand so much from them."

Conversion

He explained: "Even in this predominantly Catholic country, Filipinos need to leave behind a lot of things in order to grow as a nation. That's why Ash Wednesday is symbolic. It ushers in the Lenten Season which calls the whole nation to enter a period of conversion and repentance."

"Ash Wednesday is a renewal of one's baptismal vows," Diwa said. "When the priest marks one's forehead with ashes, it is a manifestation that one is repenting for his or her sins."

The ashes come from burned palm leaves (*palaspas*) used in the previous year's Palm Sunday celebration.

"Waving palm leaves on Palm Sunday symbolizes one's willingness to follow Christ. But being human, we falter along the way," he said.

The palm leaves dry up and turn brown so the Church burns them to signify repentance and renewal.

Diwa said attending Mass and having one's forehead marked with burned palm ashes are "highly recommended although not obligatory."

"It's a good manifestation of what we interiorly desire," he said, "but even if we are not able to receive the ashes, as long as there is that desire to change and seek forgiveness from God, it's OK."

Ash Wednesday: Life is only so many heartbeats

From page A1

This is the law of creation. For we are all terminal beings. The certainty of death should therefore not be feared, it should instead give focus to one's life. For there is life after life. Death is only the beginning...

Today's reminders

We're likely to hear these reminders today, Ash Wednesday. Catholic Christendom marks this day as the beginning of the 40-day Lenten season that leads up to Easter. People will troop to churches while some enterprising priests and lay ministers will troop to crowded public places to reach out to the lonely and weary faithful, scattered as in a diaspora.

Forty days after Ash Wednesday comes Palm Sunday, the harbinger of Easter. Forty is a biblical number. The Great Deluge lasted for 40 days and 40 nights, the Chosen People traveled 40 years in the desert before they reached the Promised Land, Jesus fasted for 40 days.

Ash Wednesday is also a day of fasting and abstinence, as are the other Fridays of Lent. Healthy people from ages 18 to 60 are urged to fast by eating only one full meal plus two smaller meals and refrain from meat dishes.

Give up cravings

Those who are not meat-eaters could give up something else that their bodies crave and enjoy. Self-absorbed Christians would be mortified to learn that these acts of self-denial are small compared to what the Muslims deny themselves during their fasting days.

These acts, we are reminded, should not be looked upon merely as penance and renunciation but also as ways to discipline the body, an exercise in curbing wants and desires and a means to draw one's attention away from the selfish self and the pampered ego.

Ashes and dust have been used interchangeably to stress not only penance, but also the inevitability of physical death and decay. It was first heard from the angry God of Genesis: "With sweat on your face you will eat your bread, until you return to clay, for it was from clay that you were taken, for you are dust and unto dust you shall return."

The last part is what the priest (or a designated minister) says as he/she puts ashes in the form of a cross on the foreheads of the Catholic faithful. It is not only a reminder, it is a call to conversion. Today's Old Testament (OT) reading (Joel 2:12-18) has the compassionate Yahweh calling out: "Rend your heart, not your garment... I am sending you grain, new wine and oil..."

Malls and marketplaces

But Jesus in today's New Testament reading (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18) warns against showy display of repentance, a reminder politicians and celebrities should observe: "When you fast, do not put on a miserable face as do the hypocrites."

In the days of old, the faithful were supposed to wipe away the ashes on their forehead when they left the church, the mark of the ashes were to be kept in their hearts instead.

But today, people with soot on their foreheads will be seen walking around in malls and marketplaces. The church has often brought the Mass and the liturgy to these busy, crowded places to seek out the faithful who might not have the time and inclination to go to places of worship. This has been a subject of debate. Do people still find time to worship? If they don't, should places of worship now be made portable, moveable and therefore accessible by bringing them to crowded places? That is another story.

STARTING 'EM YOUNG: A nun makes the sign of the cross with ashes on an infant's forehead to mark the start of the 40-day observance of the Lenten season.

But the practice of fasting and penance during Lent are not for one's personal sanctification only. It also has a social dimension. As Yahweh reminded: "See the fast that pleases me: To break the fetters of injustice... and set the oppressed free." (Isaiah 58:6)

Rape of persons and nature

Although it is not one of the regular Bible readings for Ash Wednesday, the story about the rape of David's daughter Tamar by her brother Ammon is one of the OT readings depicting the use of ashes as a sign of mourning and repentance. It is therefore one of the suggested readings for those interested in the subject of ashes and sackcloths and the meaning of Ash Wednesday. "Tamar then put ashes on her head and tore the robe she was wearing." (2 Samuel 13: 19)

The virgin Tamar was raped by her own lustful brother who plotted his evil intention so craftily, Tamar did not know that a trap had been set for her. The story line is being reenacted again and again in modern society trapped in a culture of rape—of human beings and of nature. Enough, we are reminded.

Ash Wednesday is replete with historical and biblical symbolism. Ashes were an ancient symbol of penance used by the ancient Jews. It also had important meaning for other pre-Christian cultures. For present-day civilization it could also mean rectification for sins against nature, for raping and razing nature to the ground and leaving ashes of destruction.

Visible signs

But today, people need more visible signs and symbols to jolt them. Like global warming. They are like the people of Bethsaida and Chorazin who could not read the signs of the times even with their eyes open wide.

Other readings on ashes and repentance are found in Ester 4:1-3, Job 42:6 and Jeremiah 6:26.

In olden times, the blessing of the ashes used to be one of the greatest liturgical rites of the year originally intended for public penitents. Now it is for all. The ashes come from the burned palms or olive branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday.

A layer deeper

There are those who feel that the significance of the ashes is starting to be lost on many Christians who are too engrossed with the concerns of daily living. If at all they have the time, these Christians wearily queue up in church, get their foreheads stamped and then walk away.

Some priests suggest that communities get involved and do the ritual themselves by bringing blessed ashes to their work place or their neighborhood and have some kind of meaningful rite of repentance of their own. But this needs preparation.

"It seems the human has lost its way in the order of things," Columban Father John Leydon, an ecologist, once said. "We live in a society that has very little to offer in terms of meaning of life. Is the greatest one the one who dies with the most toys? Lent is the time for us to go a layer deeper into ourselves in preparation for the Paschal Mystery. Easter is the consummation of the wedding of the human and the divine."

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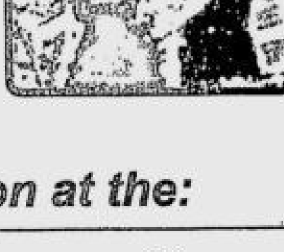

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Tax Ammesty on Voluntary Declaration of Undeclared Real Properties

Ordinance No. 058-A "AN ORDINANCE GRANTING AMNESTY ON VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE BY OWNERS OF BUILDING, HOUSES AND OTHER STRUCTURE WITHOUT THE REQUIRED BUILDING PERMITS OR HAVE NOT BEEN DECLARED AS SUCH WITH THE CITY ASSESSOR FOR TAXATION PURPOSES"

1. Owners of the said residential, commercial and industrial buildings which have not been declared with the Office of the City Assessors for taxation purposes are given until April 30 2007 to voluntarily disclose the existence of said with the Office of the City Assessor.

2. The said structures shall be assessed be accordingly as follows:

Commercials and industrial buildings - P1,500.00/square meter

Computation: Floor area x P1,500.00 x 50% = assessed value
Assessed Value x 2.5% = TAX DUE

Residential buildings - P500.00/square meter

Computation: Floor area x P500.00 x 20% = assessed value
Assessed Value x 2% = TAX DUE

3. The minimum amount to be paid shall in no case be less than P10,000.00 for commercial / industrial buildings and P3,000.00 for residential buildings.

4. Deadline for filing of voluntary disclosure shall be on April 30, 2007.

Liberal Party holds proclamation rally for 2 Senate candidates

By Norman Bordadora

JUMPING THE GUN ON THE Genuine Opposition, the opposition wing of the Liberal Party yesterday held a proclamation rally for its two senatorial candidates—reelectionist Sen. Francis Pangilinan and Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Nonoy" Aquino III.

The LP wing identified with Sen. Franklin Drilon proclaimed Pangilinan and Aquino at the historic Club Filipino in San Juan, Metro Manila.

It was at the Club Filipino that Corazon Aquino, Noynoy's mother, took her oath as President in February 1986 shortly after People Power I ousted the Marcos regime.

Aquino—who was accompanied by his mother and youngest sister, TV host Kris—told reporters that he would still attend the GO proclamation rally on Feb. 24 in San Juan.

The congressman is part of the 12-member senatorial ticket of GO, which also includes Pangilinan.

Pangilinan, accompanied by parents Donato and Emma and sister Angeli, would not say if he would attend the GO kick-off.

He did not categorically say whether he would campaign for GO's senatorial candidates.

"It's really a non-issue. We agreed that there should be respect for differences in campaigning," Pangilinan told reporters when asked if he would show up at the GO proclamation rally scheduled for Feb. 24, also in San Juan.

Pressed for a "yes" or "no" on the matter, Pangilinan said: "I guess I already answered the question."

"What is more substantial is that we recognize the position that we have on issues. Whether or not I will attend, we have to put that aside," he said.

Battle of our lives

In his acceptance speech, Pangilinan said: "This may be the toughest battle of our lives, but it can very well be the battle not only of Noynoy and myself but the struggle of every Filipino—the struggle of all those who have grown weary, who have become disheartened, the powerless, the impoverished. All those who yearn for the better, all those who have yet to feel and benefit from the economic upturn."

"Together," he said, they "can change this nation."

Aquino said he would work for the continued independence of the Senate as an institution, taking erring government officials to account and opposing Charter change whose timing is not right.

"My father (the martyred former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr.) told me not to easily give my word, especially if you're not sure if you'd be able to keep it," Aquino said to underline his commitment to keep his election promises.

Hyatt 10

Among those who attended the LP rally were "Hyatt 10" members Corazon Soliman, Ging Deles and Imelda Nicolas; Black and White movement official Leah Navarro; Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel; lawyers Harry Roque, Joel Cadiz and Christopher Belmonte.

Roque will run for congressman in Pasay City, Cadiz in Camarines Sur, and Belmonte in Quezon City—all under LP.

The Hyatt 10 is a group of Cabinet secretaries and other government officials who resigned in 2005 amid reports that President Macapagal-Arroyo stole the 2004 presidential election. They, along with Drilon, then the Senate president and head of LP, asked Ms Arroyo to step down.

A group of LP members led by Manila Mayor Lito Atienza dissociated itself from the party led by Drilon after the latter called on Ms Arroyo to resign.

Asked if Aquino and Pangilinan would attend the GO proclamation rally notwithstanding the LP proclamation rally, former Education Secretary Florencio Abad, an LP official, said, "Noynoy will attend."

Pressed for Pangilinan's attendance in the GO rally on Saturday, Abad smiled and said, "You better ask him."

The independents

Would Pangilinan call on voters to support those in the GO ticket in the same manner that GO candidates said they would campaign for him and Senate President Manuel Villar?

"I call on the people to be selective and look into the track record of the candidate. Who will be independent (if they make it to the Senate?)" Pangilinan said.

Pangilinan and Villar, although part of the GO senatorial slate, are campaigning on their own. They started their respective campaigns with the announcement that they were running as independent candidates.

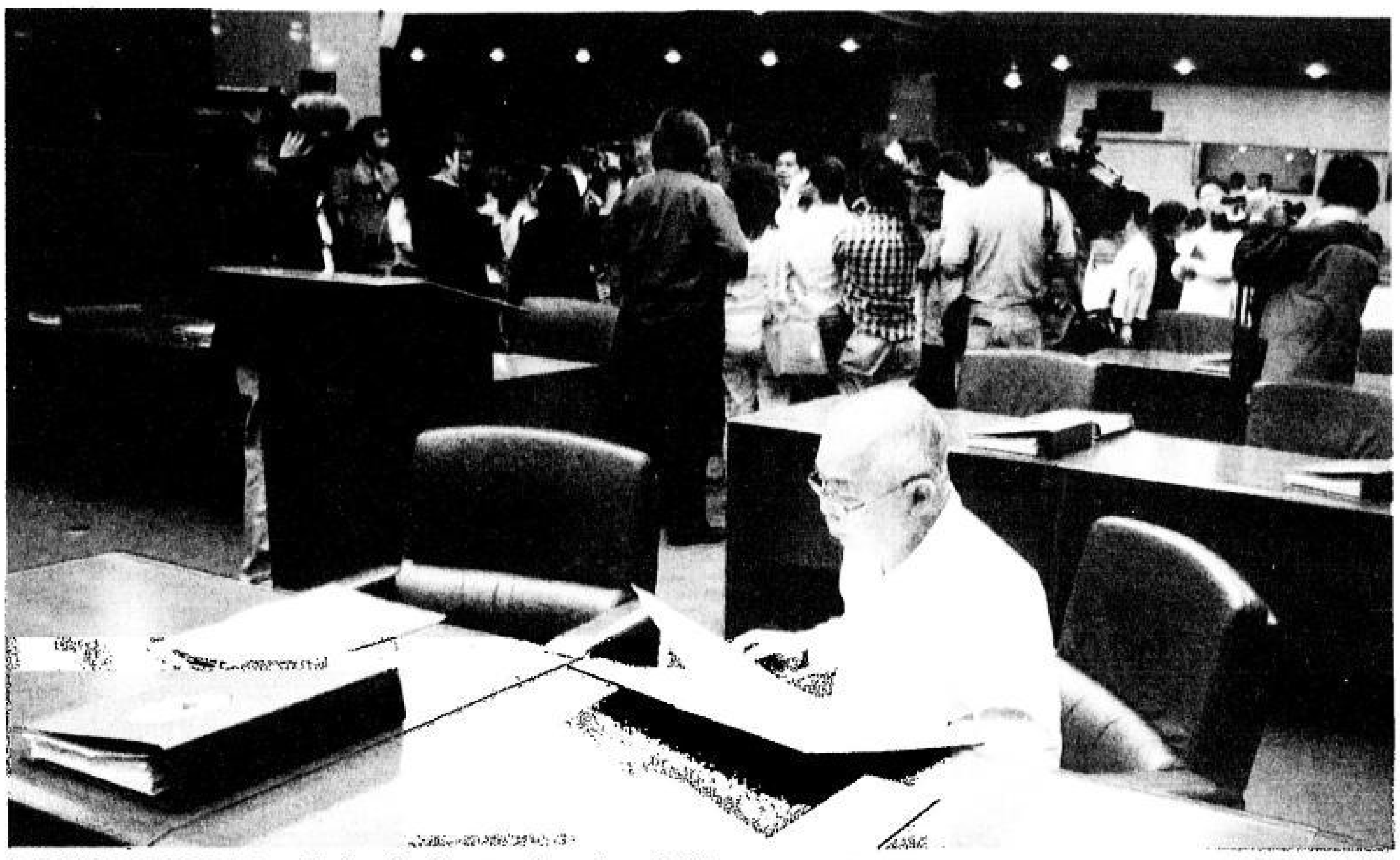
Both are members of the Senate's so-called Wednesday Group, which is made up of four senators first elected to the body in 2001.

The group also included Senators Ralph Recto and Joker Arroyo, who chose to run under the administration's Team Unity. Vice President Noli de Castro was a member of the group when he was a senator.

There was talk of Pangilinan and Villar being dropped as GO candidates because of their independent stance.

All appeared well when their respective parties, the LP and the Nacionalista Party came up with a categorical statement that they were squarely behind GO.

"This is not separating ourselves from the Genuine Opposition. This is just the party proclaiming its own candidates," Abad said.



A SOLITARY SENATOR Juan Flavier, who plans to retire at the end of his term, attends to his work while reelectionist Sen. Panfilo Lacson is being cornered by the media. ROGER MARGALLO

Anti-Pagcor lawmakers in House concede defeat

By Christian V. Esguerra

A CONGRESSMAN VEHEMENTLY opposed to the franchise extension granted to the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) yesterday practically conceded defeat as the House of Representatives ended its special session last night.

Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Teodoro Casiño admitted that he and his fellow lawmakers were left with very little option to question—and more so—overturn the ruling allowing the state-run gambling agency to extend its operation after its franchise expires on July 11, 2008.

"It's like shooting at the moon," he told the INQUIRER. "For all intents and purposes, we were defeated."

Faced with a host of technicalities on parliamentary procedures, Casiño admitted that minority lawmakers were not planning to mount an aggressive effort last night. He said they would first consult with their lawyers on the feasibility of raising the matter before the Supreme Court.

The House on Monday night voted 40-16 in favor of the controversial Pagcor bill, which had been certified urgent by President Macapagal-Arroyo. The opposition questioned both the propriety and manner through which the agency was granted a franchise extension.

Casiño said many congressmen were actually distancing themselves from the bill, which supposedly explained the relatively few lawmakers present at the plenary when the matter was put to a vote.

"Many of them didn't want to be identified with the bill because it is a gambling bill," he said. "And since we're nearing the elections, there would be the natural suspicion that it was passed so congressmen could get favors from Pagcor for their campaign kitty."

An initial voice vote on Monday appeared to favor those who rejected the bill, according to the party-list lawmaker. But the presiding officer, Deputy House Speaker Raul del Mar, said he was "not too certain about the outcome" and asked lawmakers to stand up.

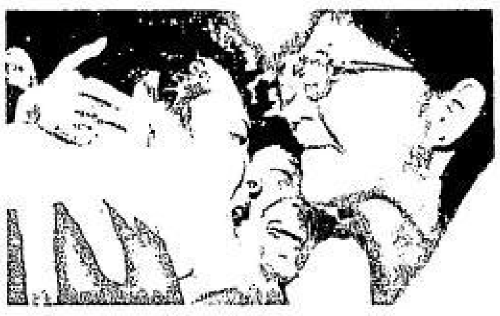
The subsequent 40-16 vote—a mere total of 56—didn't comprise a majority of the 172 quorum, Casiño argued. But Del Mar claimed that the outcome did not necessarily reflect the absence of a quorum.

Casiño admitted that the body could technically proceed with its affairs even with one or two people in the plenary in case no one questioned the quorum.

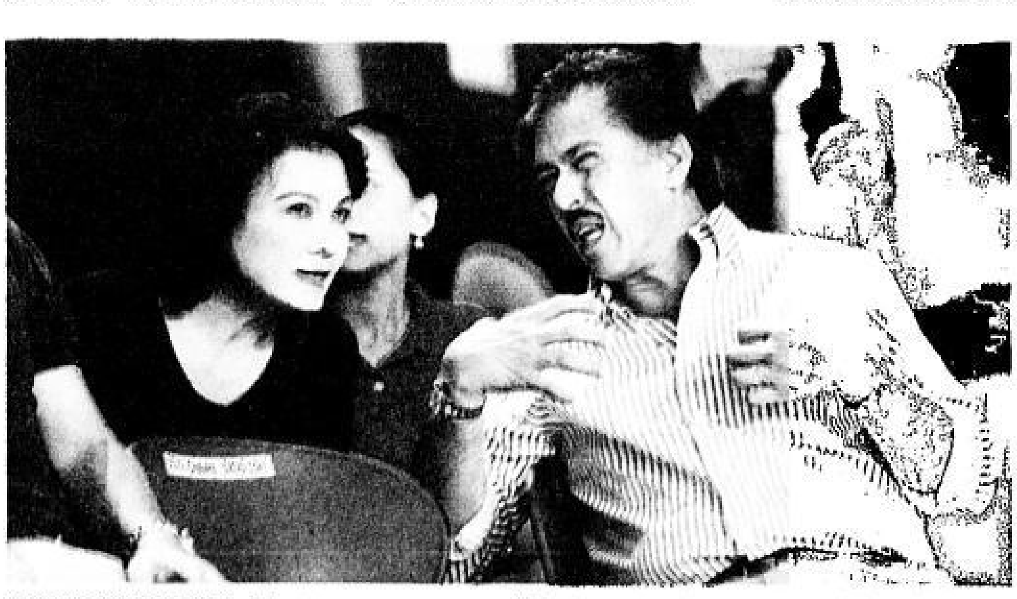
CONGRESS SPECIAL SESSION: Time off for a photo op to endorse reelectionist Senators Panfilo Lacson and Manny Villar (center). With them are Senators Pia Cayetano and Alfredo Lim.

LYN RILLON

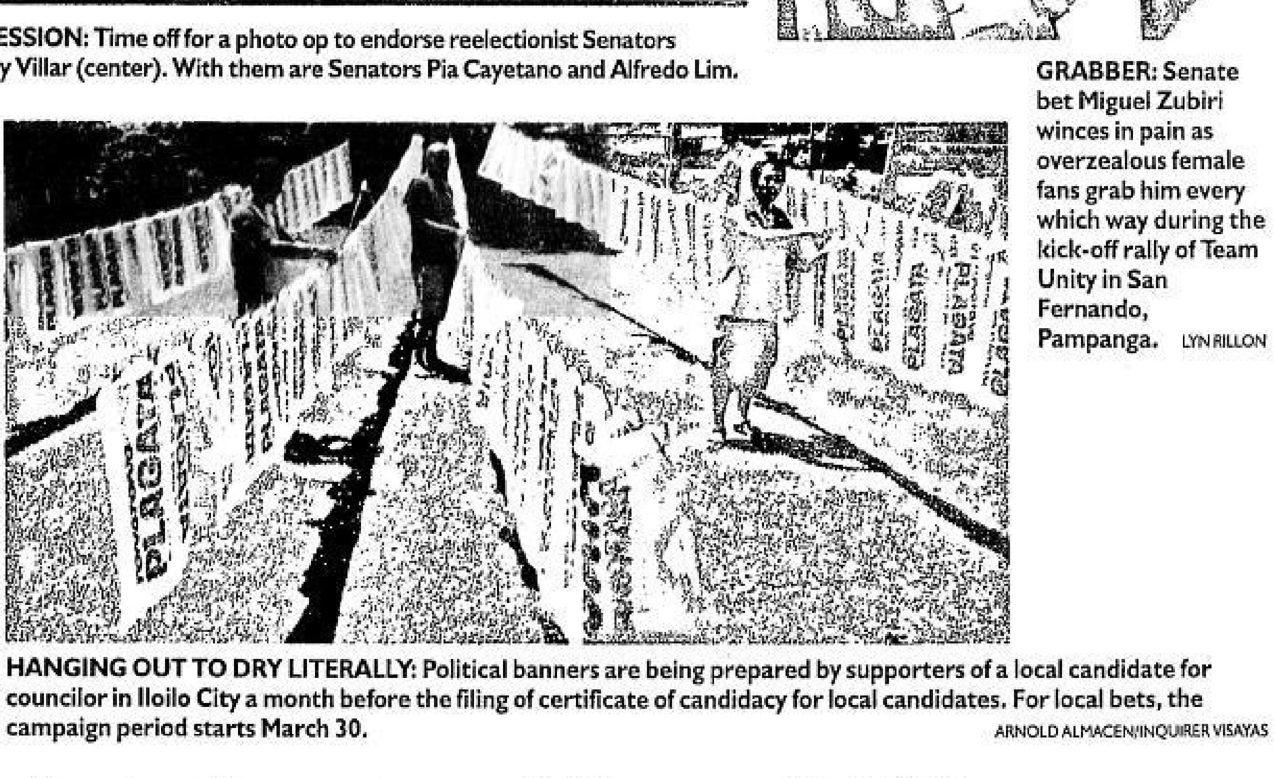
THE OTHER ACTOR in the Team Unity ticket, Cesar Montano, and Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson are getting to know each other.



GRABBER: Senate bet Miguel Zubiri winces in pain as overzealous female fans grab him every which way during the kick-off rally of Team Unity in San Fernando, Pampanga. LYN RILLON



SHOW BIZ FOLKS look better on any stage, political or otherwise, the likes of Team Unity Senate bet Tito Sotto and his wife Helen Gamboa. LYN RILLON



HANGING OUT TO DRY LITERALLY: Political banners are being prepared by supporters of a local candidate for councilor in Iloilo City a month before the filing of certificate of candidacy for local candidates. For local bets, the campaign period starts March 30. ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

Palace comes up with 6-point plan to address killings

From page A1

Ermita said the President had also authorized the release of the Melo Commission report on the killings to the Commission on Human Rights which will be a core member of the joint fact-finding body formed to look deeper into these crimes.

He also said Armed Forces Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon had reiterated to his men strict adherence to command responsibility.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has requested the European Union for technical support in the investigation in line with the six-point action plan of the President, he said.

Ermita said the Melo Commission had briefed the diplomatic corps on the recent actions made by the government in solving these killings, including the transmittal of the latest reports to the Philip Alston, the visiting UN special rapporteur for extrajudicial killings.

"This issue cannot be solved at a snap of a finger. For some, anything the government does is suspect or is never enough, but we have made our commitment and we are confident that we are on the right course."

Melo report

Human rights groups put the number of extrajudicial killings at more than 800 since 2001. The INQUIRER count is 273.

Yesterday, Malacañang released the Melo report to European Union diplomats, including Papal Nuncio Archbishop Fernando Filoni, during a briefing at Camp Aguinaldo conducted by the military on the insurgency situation in the country.

Ermita later told reporters that with the Melo report and the briefing he hoped that the diplomats would be able to have a context in understanding the situation in the country.

"We have an insurgency, we have the secessionists, we have the terrorists, therefore, it is within this context that all these killings are happening in the Philippines," said Ermita.

'Produce results'

On Monday's killing of Hernani Pastolero, editor of the weekly Lightning Courier, in Sultan Kudarat, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President "joins media organizations and the public in condemning this recent atrocity."

In a statement, Bunye said the President had ordered the police to "produce clear results at the earliest possible time in the investigation of this case."

"We do not condone such attacks on journalists especially if these relate to the curtailment of press freedom. We extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Hernani Pastolero and assure them justice will be served," Bunye said. *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

INQUIRER Northern Luzon

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Website: www.inquirer.net/regions
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Pig as part of way of life of Igorots

By Maurice Malanes
Baguio City

IGOROTS, UNLIKE THE CHINESE, do not have zodiac signs in which the pig is part of 12 animals that help indicate a well-calculated lunar calendar.

But the animal, now a likable pet in the Year of the Golden (Fire) Pig, has been and continues to be part of the way of life of the Igorots.

Pigs used to indicate the wealth and status of Igorots. Until the 1970s in Kibungan, Benguet, for example, the number of pigs a family offered in thanksgiving feasts called "pedit" determined the social status of that family.

So the community's "baknang" or "kadangyan" (rich or members of the upper class) were those who could host the highest level of pedit. The highest pedit level involves 21 pigs and the first level, three pigs.

During the pedit, a "manbunong" (traditional priest) would usually pray: "O gods and spirits, may you bless the members of this family so the pigs they raise and the rice and sweet potato they cultivate may become productive and so that we can come together again to celebrate another bigger pedit in the future."

The rich were highly regarded as such because they were able to share their wealth with the rest of the community through the pigs offered during the series of feasts they hosted.

Like plaques or badges of honor, the skulls of pigs offered during feasts were usually … displayed around the walls of a family's hut

Badge of honor

And like plaques or badges of honor, the skulls of pigs offered during feasts were usually fastened into sticks and displayed around the walls of a family's hut.

The Kankanaey folk of Kibungan hardly hold the pedit these days so their perceptions about the rich or people with higher social status have also changed.

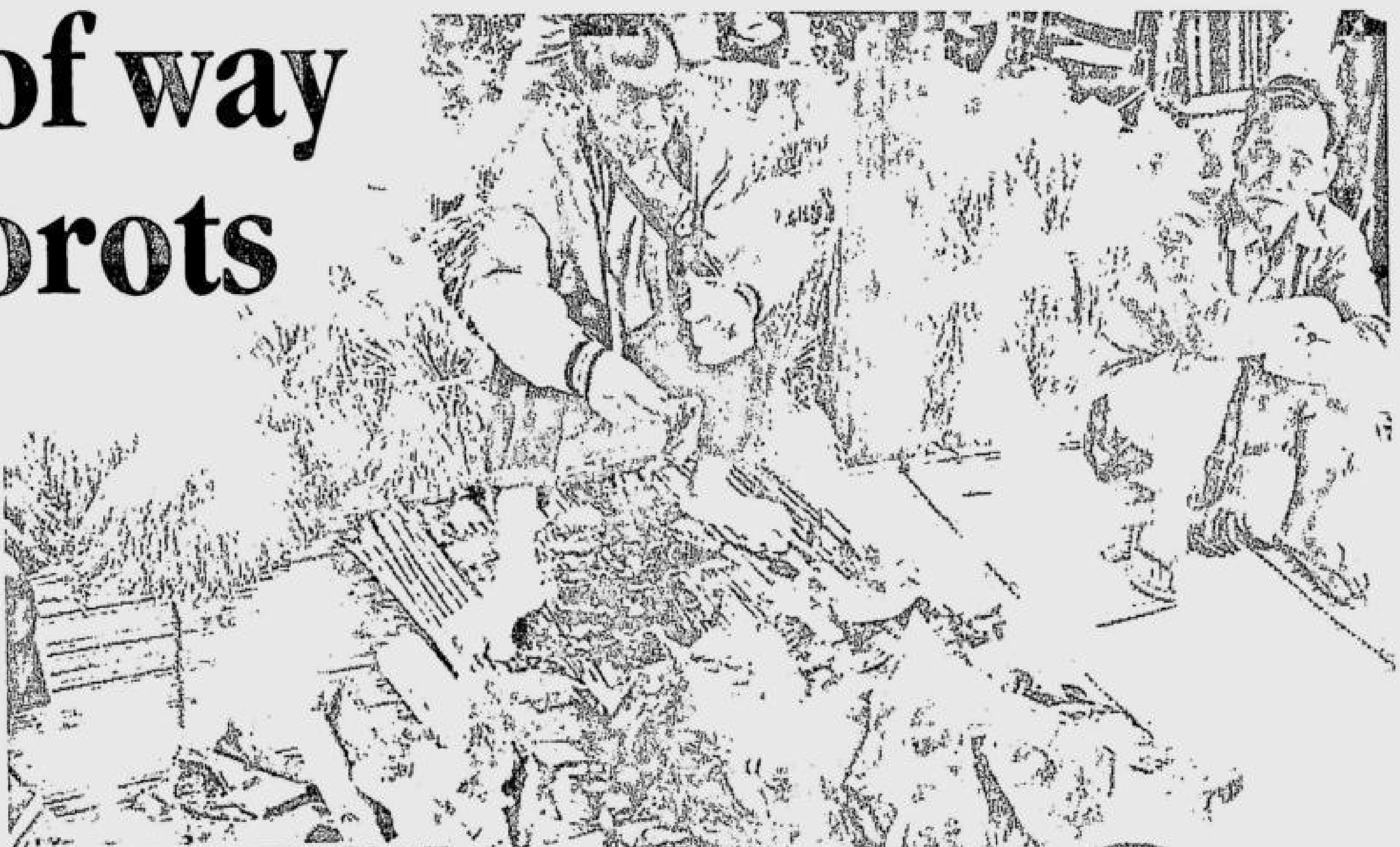
In place of family-sponsored feasts, the municipal government in recent years instituted a collective thanksgiving celebration timed during the town's founding anniversary in November.

Allotted with a budget, the collective celebration requires at least a dozen pigs as offerings to the gods and spirits.

Feasts during clan reunions have replaced the pedit and each clan member contributes an amount, most of which is used to buy pigs to be slaughtered for lunch.

In both town celebration and clan reunion feasts, an elder still reads the pigs' bile and liver for signs. A "juicy" bile and elongated liver show signs of good luck, prosperity and growth.

In this Year of the Fire Pig, some people are now taking care of pigs as pets, believing that their pet would usher in better luck and more wealth. But Igorot folk have been raising pigs, which they have long associated with wealth and prosperity.



PIGS are special to Ifugao folk because they are sacrificed in ritual feasts. PHOTOS BY EV ESPIRITU

THIS BONTOC woman won a "futog" (pig) as prize from playing a community game common to the indigenous people of Mt. Province. The game reprises the Igorot method of catching pigs which they sacrifice in ritual feasts dedicated to their ancestors.

Fictionist dares to voice the unspeakable

By Elizabeth Lolarga
Contributor

SUCHEN CHRISTINE LIM, A multi-awarded writer from the island state of Singapore, dispensed with "competition for promotion" in the academe to devote her time to writing prize-winning novels and a play.

She told this to an audience of literature students, professors and fellow writers recently at the University of the Philippines Baguio as part of the College of Arts and Communication's Talastasan lecture series.

Lim, author of the novels "Fistful of Colours," which won the first Singapore Literature Prize in 1992, "Ricebowl," "Gift from the Gods" and "A Bit of Earth," co-author of the play "The Amah: A Portrait in Black and White," which was given the Short Play Merit Prize in 1989, among other works, recalled how she was "a nobody, a teacher secretly trying to write, getting up early before 6 a.m. to lug my Olivetti typewriter and set it up in the canteen."

SINGAPOREAN writer Suchen Lim
ELIZABETH LOLARGA

She was aware that the sound of the typewriter bothered the students eating around her. Then she met a visiting Filipino professor, Lucila Hosillos, who quickly offered Lim her faculty office so that the latter could have, in Virginia Woolf's words, "a room of one's own." That was how Lim's first novel, Ricebowl, the story of a Roman Catholic nun protesting the Vietnam War, came to be written.

Lim said how precious having a room of her own was in a dense setting where there are 6,000 people per square kilometer.

When Fistful of Colours won for Lim Singapore $10,000, one of the three judges was Filipino fictionist, now National Artist for Literature, F. Sionil Jose. She remembered sharing a cab ride with him and he taking her hand in his.

Thinking why an old man was holding her hand, she heard him advise her with a sense of urgency, "Suchen, write. Continue to write."

To her who lives in "a society that emphasizes acquisition of money and material things," Jose's words "mattered a lot" even though her monetary prize could not go a long way.

Lim said there was "no writing tradition in my family." Neither did she go to a writing school. She did not dream of being a writer. She thought of herself as "a failed revolutionary so the next best thing [to go into] was writing." But she said, "Creative writing does not put rice on the table."

Nevertheless, from her manual typewriter she shifted to an electric typewriter and lately with her royalties, she bought a Macintosh computer.

Prof. Lily Rose Tope, who teaches Lim's works in her classes at UP Diliman, described the author as bold enough to "question ethnic categorizations. Things one cannot say in public she has beautifully articulated in her novels."

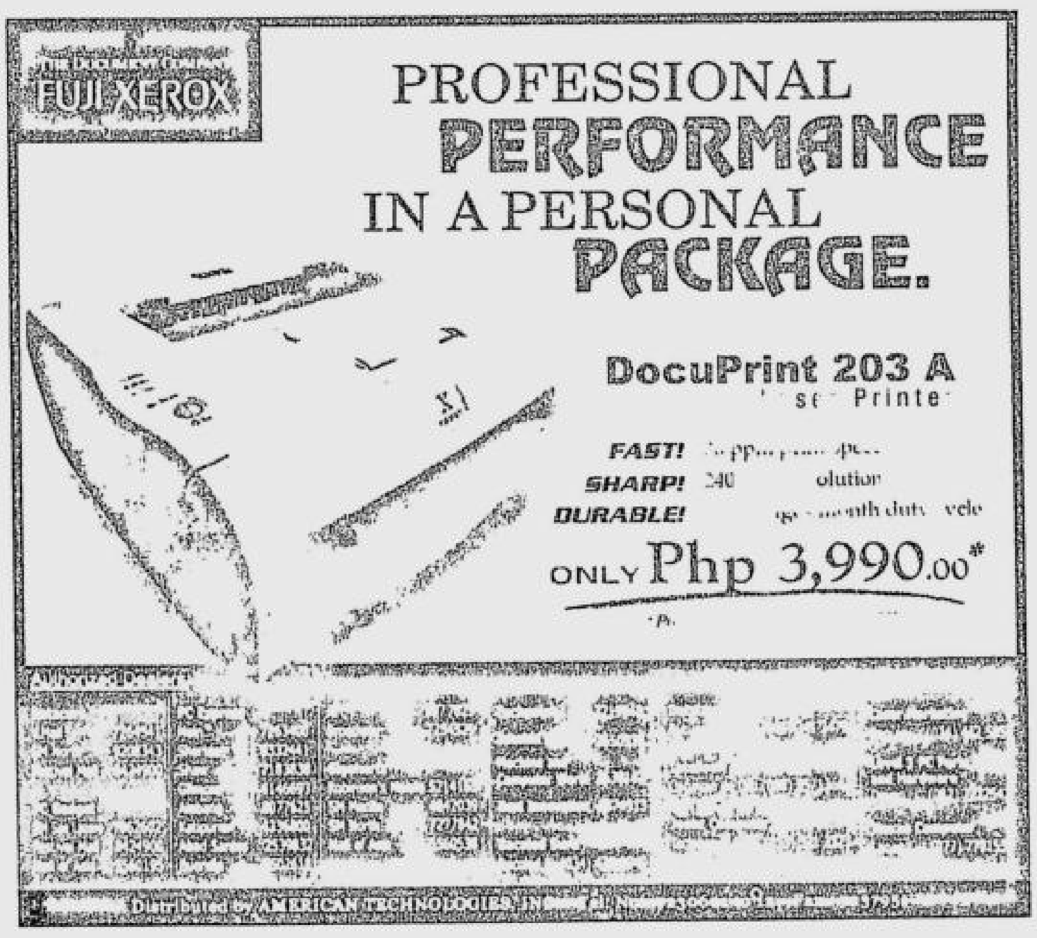
Living in a state that is multi-ethnic and multifaceted with no dominant religion, Lim said she does not "feel I have sinned if I meditate in a Buddhist temple or worship in a Protestant chapel. That is my sensibility. I don't play mahjong. I don't shop or gossip. I used to go to work one hour before working time so I could write."

When she was up for promotion to a prestigious post in a school, she turned it down and laughed. She said, "I resolutely refused the bureaucratic and administrative post that was troublesome. I always stick to the development of my craft and skills."

She looked back on "those days writing in the dark or semi-darkness," a period when her personal life was in chaos, "but the act of creation gave me a sense of order. Wily-nily there must be a universal spirit of creation" that made her feel she was being held in someone's hand.

Confessing to not being a social being, Lim said she enjoyed solitude and taking long walks. "An artist," she said, "is like a caterpillar that needs to spin and spin."

'An artist is like a caterpillar that needs to spin and spin'



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Manila Water service upgrade in Makati and Quezon City

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Makati
Schedule: 10:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 21 to 4:00 a.m, Thursday, February 22
Affected areas: Barangays Poblacion, Valenzuela, Guadalupe Viejo (along J.P. Rizal St.) and Olympia.

Quezon City
Schedule: 10:00 p.m., Thursday, February 22, up to 12:01 p.m., Friday, February 23.
Affected areas: Barangays Paltok, Nayon Kanluran, Heroes Hill, West Triangle, Philam Subdivision, DBP Compound, EDSA from West Avenue to Quezon Blvd., Quezon Avenue from EDSA to Araneta Avenue, Barangay Magsaysay, Alicia and EDSA from North Avenue to Congressional.

Manila Water Company is advising all residents of the said areas to store enough water to supply their needs during the interruption period.

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₱800M for Guimaras rehab held back

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—OFFICIALS OF GUIMARAS ISLAND are calling on President Macapagal-Arroyo to intervene in the release of the P800-million fund intended for rehabilitation and livelihood programs for areas and residents that suffered from the Petron oil spill.

Guimaras Gov. JC Rahman Nava said none of the proposed programs and projects has been implemented, six months after the spill hit the island, because the funds have not been released.

The funds, contained in the supplemental budget passed last year by Congress, was intended to finance the rehabilitation of damaged marine resources and for livelihood projects for residents who were displaced by the oil spill.

The fund would also finance long-term research and monitoring of the impact of oil spills on the environment and human health.

The President had promised to support the restoration efforts last year, shortly after she declared a national calamity after the MT Solar I, which was carrying over 2 million liters of bunker fuel for Petron Corp. from Bataan to Zamboanga, sank in stormy seas off Guimaras on Aug. 11.

The oil spill has brought sufferings to 5,437 families.

It wrought damage to Guimaras' rich marine life and brought tourist arrivals down in resorts.

Slicing the pie

Nava said the fund would be distributed to agencies and the local government, which would implement the projects. These include P130 million for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, P100 million for the Department of Agriculture, P250 million for the Department of Social Welfare and Development and P210 million for the local government units.

Part of the fund would also go to the University of the Philippines in the Visayas, which is spearheading the research conducted by the scientific community on the impact of the oil spill.

Rafael Coscolluela, Presidential adviser for Western Visayas and head of the regional task force Solar I, said the agencies and the provincial government have already completed and submitted the necessary documents, including the finalization of the implementing rules and regulations.

"We are just awaiting the approval of the Department of Budget and Management," said Coscolluela.

Mayor Diosdado Gonzaga of Nueva Valencia, the worst hit of the five towns of Guimaras, called on the President to intervene to hasten the release of the funds.

Dying mangroves

"It is quite lamentable to note that many representatives of government agencies, nongovernment organizations and, even, the private sector have come to offer their expertise to clean the mangrove areas but until now nothing has been done," said Gonzaga in a letter to the President dated Feb. 1.

Gonzaga said that Petron Corp. terminated its cleanup activities in coastal areas and declared that the coastlines of Nueva Valencia as clean, but mangroves, including the fully grown ones, continue to die.

"If no immediate solution is applied to arrest this alarming situation, I believe, sooner or later, there will be an environmental disaster covering the mangrove areas in this municipality," said Gonzaga.

Gonzaga also lamented the lack of "proper identification" of livelihood projects.

BUTTERFLY SEASON
Butterflies and moths undergo complete metamorphosis in which they go through different life stages. The caterpillar molts (loses its old skin) many times as it grows. It turns into a pupa (chrysalis), its resting stage. Then it becomes a beautiful adult. The adult will continue the cycle and reproduce. This new butterfly farm tourist attraction is a center being maintained at the Crocodile Farm in Davao City.

RYAN LIM

Flower festival opened to politicians

BAGUIO CITY—ORGANIZERS OF THE Baguio Flower Festival have opened this week's street dancing and floral parades to politicians, and the administration's senatorial candidates are the first to take up the offer.

Lawyer Damaso Bangaoet, president of the Baguio Flower Festival Foundation Inc. (BFFFI), said candidates of Team Unity notified his organization that they were intending to join the "Panagbenga" street dancing parade on Saturday (Feb. 24), and the parade of floral floats on Sunday (Feb. 25).

In January, the foundation was singing a different tune.

Bangaoet had declared in last month's press briefing that the BFFFI needed to "elevate the standards" of this year's festival by making all of its activities nonpolitical.

"I couldn't really stop [Team Unity from joining]. This is a festival and we should treat them as our guests," Bangaoet told reporters on Tuesday.

"We are trying to come up with guidelines that would balance this [situation] with the nature of the festival," he said.

Bangaoet, who helped create the festival in 1996 to boost tourism, said this was not the first time that the festival organizers were unable to fend off politics.

He said administration party candidates also took advantage of the festival crowd when they joined the parades of Panagbenga's staging in 2001.

Baguio has been attracting tourists because of reports that the summer capital had been experiencing low temperatures, said Benedicto Alhambra, city tourism officer.

The city is also hosting this week the annual National Schools Press Conference, with over 2,000 participating high school students who will stay long enough to see the parades, he said.

The city is hoping that the festival will help sustain its high tourism momentum until Holy Week, he said.

Bangaoet said opposition candidates are also welcome to join the festival. "We will not discriminate [against the opposition] to benefit the administration. Everyone's welcome," he said.

But there are rules, which the foundation had already imposed in 2001 and 2004.

No senatorial and local candidates will be allowed to stray from the parade to campaign. Politicians will also not be allowed to wear his or her party colors.

Because the festival has no funds available to buy "appropriate costumes" for the politicians, every guest will be asked to wear the uniform festival shirts to enforce the guidelines, Bangaoet said.

He said the organizers hoped the mix of political rivals at the parade would not send out the wrong signals about the annual event. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

ELECTION 07

2 Abus slain in clash

ZAMBOANGA CITY—TWO ABU SAYYAF members and a soldier were killed in a 30-minute gunfight in Barangay Upper Tugbak in Indanan, Sulu on Monday night, the military said yesterday.

The clash occurred as US forces embarked on humanitarian missions in the island-province under the Balikatan Exercises.

Maj. Gen. Ruperto Pabustan, chief of the Joint Special Operations in Sulu, said Scout Rangers were on patrol in the jungles of Indanan as part of their test mission "when they saw new trails."

"They followed (the trails) and later clashed with the bandits," he said.

Pabustan did not say how many soldiers were involved in the clash but said the bandits, led by Radulan Sahiron and Julasbi Asmad, numbered about 50.

Pabustan said during the clash, four other soldiers were wounded. The body of one of the slain bandits had been recovered, he said.

"They are all out of danger and my men are still scouring the area for the body count," he said.

The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Indanan, however, said the soldiers killed a minor and not an Abu Sayyaf member.

Al Mujahid Biao, deputy commander of the MNLF's military affairs, said that they were documenting the clash.

Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong said Barangays Buanza and Bato-bato, sites of humanitarian missions being conducted by the American forces, are only about 5 km from where Monday night's clash happened.

But Loong quickly added that the proximity of the mission sites from the encounter area would not endanger US forces involved in the Balikatan. *Julie S. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

ENVIRONMENT GUARDS
National Bureau of Investigation agents seized 2.5 tons of blasting powder in Medellin, Northern Cebu on Feb. 8 during a raid on the residence of a town councilor. The powder was enough to make 40,000 dynamite sticks for illegal fishing, said Tony Oposa, head of the Visayan Sea Squadron Team that took part in the raid.

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5 farmers detained in PNP jail seek talks with UN exec

POET and writer Axel Pinpin reads a copy of the INQUIRER inside his and four other detainees' 25-square-meter cell inside Camp Vicente Lim in Calamba City. Pinpin was one of the so-called Tagaytay 5, who were jailed for allegedly trying to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

MARLON RAMOS/INQUIRER SOUTHERN LUZON

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—Five farmers languishing in jail here on suspicion they were communist guerrillas are seeking an audience with a United Nations official who was here to investigate the continuing murders of leftists and journalists.

The farmers, in a letter they sent to Phillip Alston, UN special rapporteur, said "dead people can never tell tales" and wanted to share their "anecdotes in the brink of death."

In their letter, the so-called "Tagaytay 5" said accounts of survivors like them could best attest to the role of the government in the murders and various other forms of human rights abuses.

The detainees—Axel Pinpin, Aris Sarmiento, Rico Ybañez, Riel Custodio and Michael Masayes—said their experiences could be used in Alston's inquiry into extrajudicial executions under the Arroyo administration.

"Only survivors who were placed at the edge of death can tell their stories," the five said in their letter dated Feb. 16, 2007, a copy of which was given to the INQUIRER.

"(T)his is our very reason why we would like to meet you personally on this matter to enable us to narrate to you in person the harrowing experiences we were made to undergo and experiences that we now undergo as political detainees."

Referral

The group also asked Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, to refer their case to the UN High Commission on Human Rights, the UN Human Rights Council or to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention if their case was not covered by his mission.

"We firmly believe that our experiences as abducted persons, especially in the first seven days of our abduction, graphically illustrate the possible scenarios (experienced) by persons forcibly taken by police and military personnel ... before they were summarily ... executed," they said.

In their two-page letter, the five also narrated how they were abducted by unidentified armed men while they were cruising along a road in Tagaytay City on April 28, 2006.

They said the armed men, who later turned out to be intelligence officers of the Cavite police and the Philippine Navy, hid them from their relatives for seven days and imprisoned them without warrants or charges.

They said their captors brought them to several safe houses in blindfolds "in the dead of the night" while they were being interrogated as the agents tried to extract confessions from the farmers.

"(Our) relatives (were) systematically denied of information about our whereabouts for seven days even as our lawyers and relatives were frantically looking in various military camps and morgues," they said.

The group said these experiences were their "anecdotes in the brink of death."

Insensitive

The five, who are detained in a small holding center inside this camp, said President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to conceal the contents of the Melo Commission only showed the government's "high-handedness and insensitivity" on human rights issues.

They also said the optimism of relatives of victims of extrajudicial killings over Alston's visit only mirrored the lack of confidence of the people in the credibility of the investigation ordered by Ms Arroyo.

"Thus, we place faith that your good office shall render your own judgment based on an investigation of the spate of politically motivated killings," they added.

Last month, an official of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) said the five farmers were abducted and not arrested as the Calabarzon police had earlier claimed.

CHR Commissioner Wilhelm Soriano also recommended the filing of contempt charges against Calabarzon police officials for failing to comply with a court order regarding the prisoner's right to sunning and receiving visitors.

The CHR official also recommended to the police the transfer of the five farmers to a bigger and permanent jail facility.

The Calabarzon police, however, has yet to comply with the recommendations of the CHR. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Puffer fish kills 4 Sorsogon fishermen

BULAN, SORSOGON—FOUR FISHERMEN died here after eating puffer fish locally known as "bansilan," local authorities reported.

Mayor Helen de Castro said six others were rushed to the Bulan Municipal Hospital after eating the same fish.

The victims were all residents of Barangay Inararan, a coastal village of this town.

De Castro said she was informed about the poisoning at around 5 p.m. Sunday afternoon when the victims were rushed to the hospital.

Four victims died almost immediately upon reaching the St. Jude Clinic where they were rushed by their relatives and neighbors.

Those who died were identified as village watchman Melquias Golloso, Leo Gragas, Felicito Magalona and Domingo Hodonyo while those still confined are Joseph Ermino, Reynato Grona, Gloria Gragas, Ricky Espenilla and Judy Odono. *Bobby Q. Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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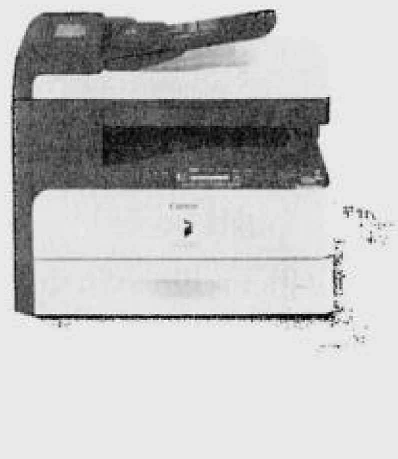

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Abra placed under Comelec control

By Alcuin Papa and Nikko Dizon

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) has identified nine potential election "hot spots," including Abra, which yesterday became the first province to be put under direct control of the Commission on Elections.

Police Deputy Chief for Operations Antonio Billones identified the provincial "areas of concern" as Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Ecija, Masbate, Western Samar, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Basilan.

The Comelec, meeting en banc, apparently felt the situation in Abra already needed intervention.

Citing "lawlessness" the poll body appointed Comelec Commissioner Romeo Brawner to take control of the northern Luzon province where tension is reportedly mounting over the murder late last year of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin, Jr.

The petition requesting Comelec supervision was filed by incumbent Governor Vicente Valero, who is tagged as the principal suspect in the killing of political rival Bersamin.

Bersamin's family initially registered their objection to Valero's petition but later dropped it.

Brawner, who now has supervision over the police and government personnel in the area, said he would look into the request of Valero to replace the members of Task Force Abra, which he claimed was sympathetic to Bersamin's camp—a charged denied by TFA head Sr. Supt. Eugene Martin.

He told reporters he would create a special task force to oversee the conduct of the May 14 mid-term elections there.

"This will take effect as soon as possible and will be (enforced) until all this lawlessness has ended," Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said in the press conference.

Meanwhile, Dep. Dir. Billones, chief of the PNP's Task Force Hope (Honest, Orderly, Peaceful Elections), said there were no immediate problems in the other areas of concern.

In a separate press conference yesterday, Billones said he has been holding talks with political and community leaders in these areas "to preempt" possible political violence.

Chief Supt. Leocadio Santiago, chief of the elite PNP Special Action Force (SAF), said he is just waiting for "redeployment orders" from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) "in the event the situation (in any of the nine provinces) becomes critical. "We are ready," he said.

In Basilan, there have been reports of shipments of a large number of firearms meant for local politicians.

Billones said the "areas of concern" were identified based on the following: A history of election-related violence; the existence of intense political rivalry; the existence of partisan armed groups or so-called "private armies"; and the existence of communist rebels, Muslim secessionists and other armed groups.

The police are already monitoring the movements of known partisan armed groups and implementing the Comelec-imposed gun ban through strategic checkpoints.

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No witnesses, no leads in slay of publisher

COTABATO CITY—POLICE INVESTIGATORS have not made any progress in their investigation into the Monday killing of local newspaperman Hernani Pastolero in Sultan Kudarat, Shariff Kabunsuan province.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police chief of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the family of Pastolero, publisher of the Lightning Courier weekly and vice president of Mindanao Publishers Association of the Philippines, could not provide investigators with any leads.

Goltiao said witnesses were afraid to come out.

"We know there are people who saw the gunmen. We have to convince them," he told dzRH radio.

Goltiao said police had a list of suspects but refused to elaborate. He said he was under orders from Philippine National Police Chief Oscar Calderon to "solve the case soonest."

Victim No. 49

Pastolero, 64, was fatally shot on Monday, becoming the 49th journalist slain in the country since 2001, police and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines reported.

"It is time the government put an end to the impunity enjoyed by those responsible by trying to identify them and bring them to justice," the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders said in a statement.

It said that nothing is known about the killers' identity or motive.

Pastolero was sitting in front of his house in Barangay Bulalo when the gunman approached and shot him from behind.

Eva Marie, 38, Pastolero's daughter, said her father had no known enemies.

"I know his untimely death had something to do with his work as a journalist," said Joel Pastolero, the victim's nephew (not brother as earlier reported). He refused to elaborate.

Pastolero also served as editor of weekly tabloids Mindanao Enquirer, Mindanao Fiscalizer and Mindanao Newscast before putting up his own weekly.

Ismael Mama, the Sultan Kudarat police director and head of Task Force Pastolero, said the Pastolero family has refused to cooperate.

"While they have their suspicions, those are very speculative," he said, adding that there was a lot of information coming in but they were all speculations and could not be substantiated.

Vague description

Witnesses were able to give only a vague description of the suspect, Mama said.

"Most of them saw the gunman walking away after two bursts of gunfire," but police artists could not "put things together" from the description given, Mama said.

Mama said his team was closely looking into a possible land dispute angle.

Pastolero was one of the leaders of a group of claimants to a parcel of land in Barangay Bulalo. A friend of his, Zaldy Bayona, was shot dead in 2004 in what police believe to be a land dispute-related killing.

Sultan Kudarat Mayor Tocao Mastura, who said he considered Pastolero to be "a brother and a good friend," vowed to leave no stone unturned in the investigation into his murder.

President Macapagal-Arroyo condemned the killing, said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

"We do not condone such attacks on journalists, especially if these relate to the curtailment of press freedom," he said in a statement.

International media groups have described the Philippines as one of the most dangerous places for journalists in the world.

The NUJP said at least 12 reporters were killed last year alone.

Tallies of the number of slain reporters in the Philippines differ from group to group, and police said they have recorded 26 journalists killed on duty since 2001. Police say many other cases were not work-related and involved land disputes or personal grudges.

Edwin O. Fernandez, Charlie C. Señase and Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao, with AP

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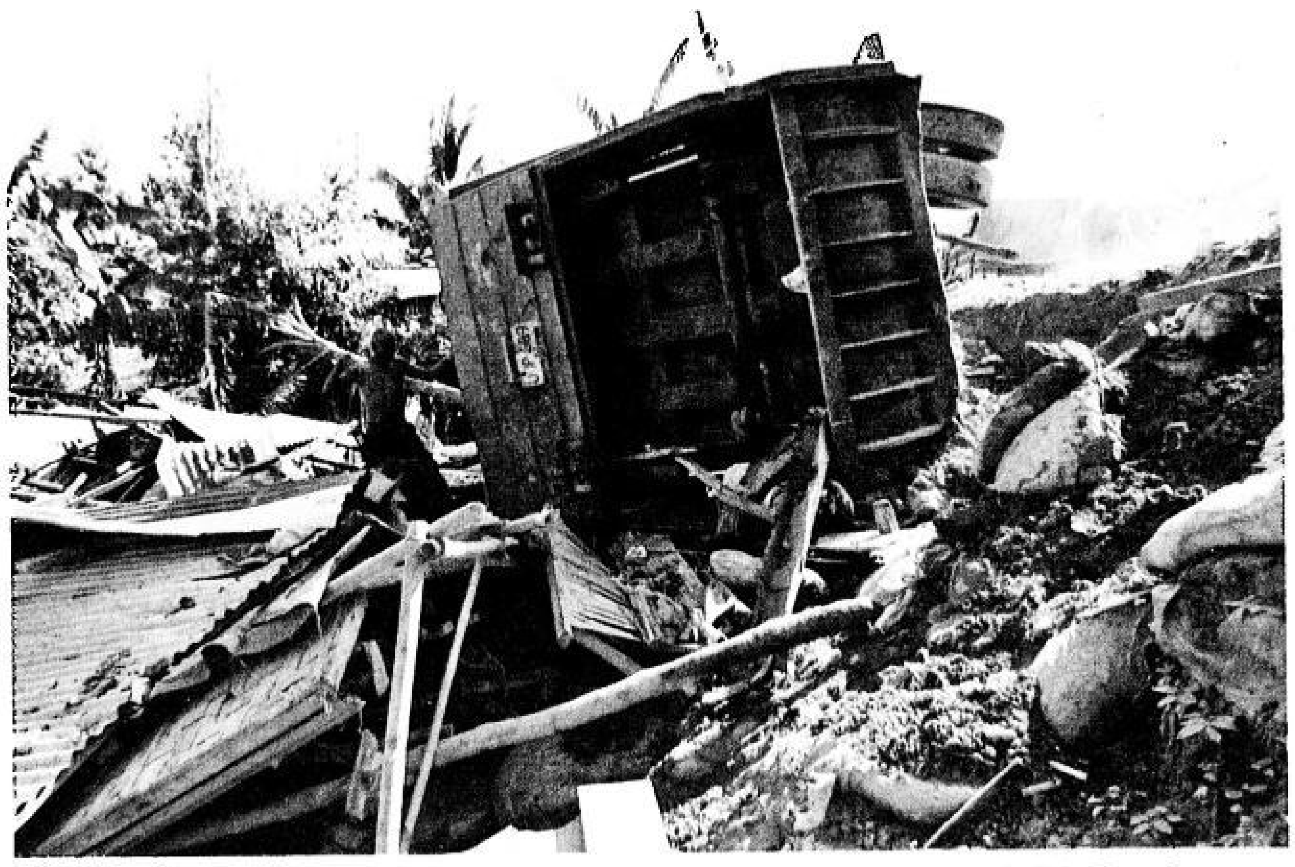


FOUR people died here after a dump truck slid down the slope and fell on top of their house in Sitio Pintor, Barangay San Isidro in Rodriguez, Rizal.
RAFFY LERMA

4 die as truck falls over house in Rizal

Driver of runaway vehicle surrenders

By Santiago R. Alcantara

FOUR MEMBERS OF A FAMILY IN Rodriguez, Rizal were killed when a 10-wheel garbage truck that had developed engine trouble rolled off the road and hit their house at 3 a.m. yesterday.

Nilo Madrid, 32; wife Elizabeth, 35 and their daughter, Erica, 6, were killed instantly.

The couple's other daughter, Laisa, 4, was rushed to the Rodriguez Infirmary Hospital by neighbors but was declared dead on arrival by attending doctors.

Investigator PO2 Rogiene Cruz said the driver, Hermogenes Gendive, 39, later surrendered to policemen in Quezon City.

"My conscience was bugging me, that's why I surrendered," Gendive said in Filipino.

Gendive said he was headed for the Montalban solid waste disposal facility when the truck had engine trouble in Sitio Pintor, Barangay San Isidro, where the road starts sloping upward.

Gendive said he got out of the vehicle to check what was wrong with it.

"I was trying to look for a 'kalso' (a piece of wood) to put under the wheels of the truck to prevent it from moving, but it suddenly moved. It was uncontrollable," he added.

The truck, with Gendive reboarding and behind the wheel, rolled down the road toward the left. It slid down a shallow slope and then fell right on top of the house of the Madrids.

Gendive said he found himself under the truck where he heard a child's voice crying out "*Nanay, Nanay* (Mother, mother)."

He wanted to look for the child but it was very dark, he added. Gendive later asked for forgiveness from relatives of the Madrid family. According to him, he surrendered to Station 6 of the Quezon City Police District in the Batasan complex because he knew that there was a police facility in the area.

He was later placed in the custody of the Rodriguez police.

When asked why he was throwing garbage in the wee hours of the morning, Gendive said that the Montalban garbage facility was open 24 hours.

The bodies of the victims were taken to the Tajona Funeral Homes in Kasiglahan Village, Barangay San Jose.

Police said they would still conduct an autopsy of the victims' bodies.

Motorists warned about heavy traffic in Edsa-Cubao area

By Jocelyn R. Uy

EXPECT HEAVY TRAFFIC IN THE Edsa-Cubao area this weekend.

The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority yesterday said the southbound lane of the 200-meter Cubao underpass in Quezon City will be closed from Friday night until Monday morning.

All three lanes of the underpass will be closed for concrete road reblocking, but one lane will be open to traffic on Saturday.

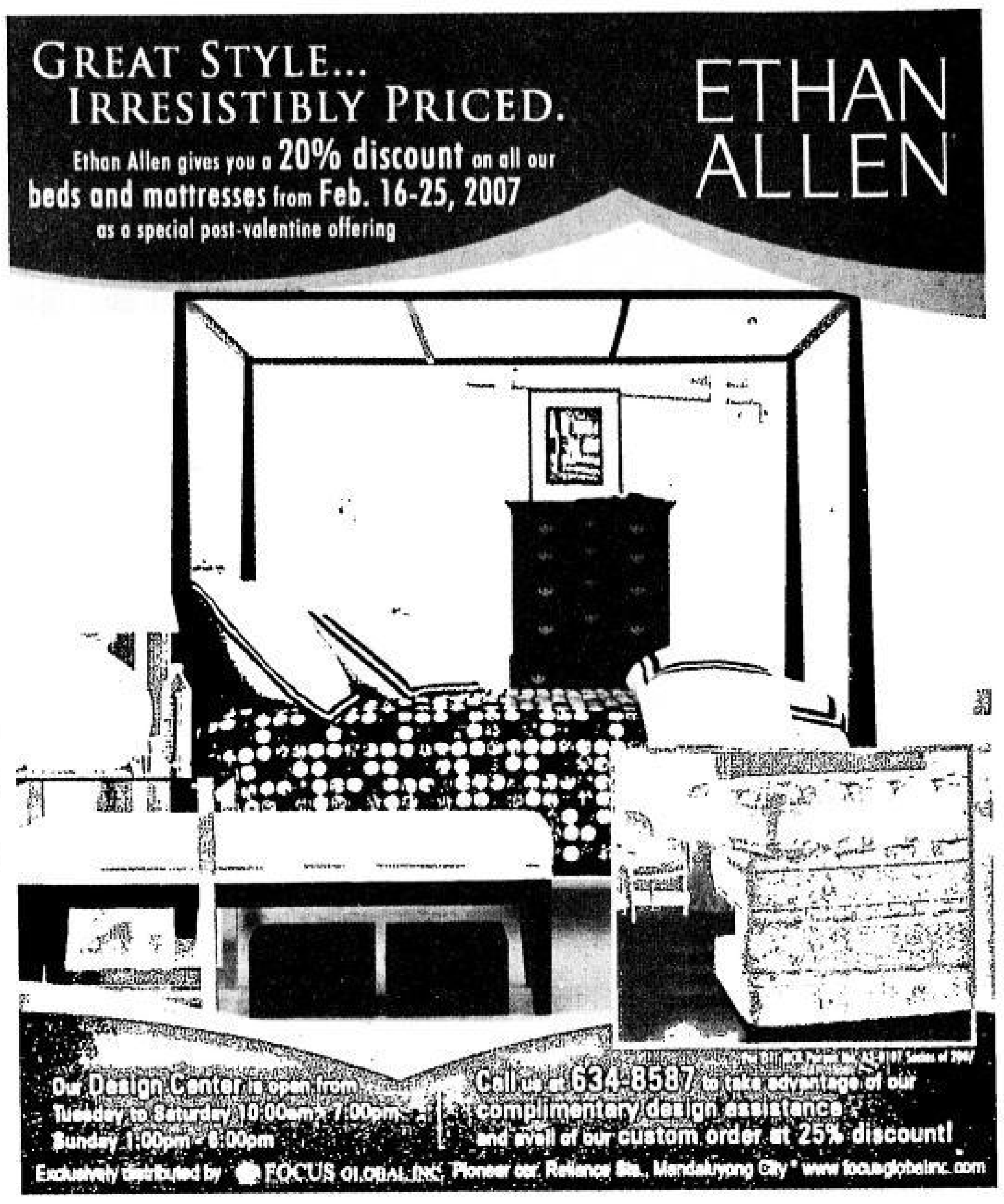
Cora Cruz, MMDA assistant general manager for planning, said the agency would be putting up several signs in five key areas before reaching the underpass to guide motorists and direct them to alternative routes.

According to her, southbound motorists should take North, East or West Avenues, Aurora Boulevard, Monte de Piedad Street or Ermin Garcia Avenue to avoid the expected traffic buildup in the Edsa-Cubao area.

Repair work on the underpass will start at 11 p.m. Friday and end at 5 a.m. Monday. Work will again resume next weekend.

Cruz, meanwhile, called on motorists to bear the inconvenience a bit longer with the ongoing rehabilitation of Edsa, Metro Manila's main highway.

The MMDA has scheduled sectional repairs on the 54-kilometer thoroughfare until next month. The work is scheduled on weekends to avoid aggravating the already heavy traffic from Monday to Friday. "The public can expect a smoother ride on Edsa once the project is completed by the end of March," Cruz said in a statement.



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Aussies and Pinoys bring hope to Metro street kids

By Ellen Wong
Contributor

WIDE-EYED AND NECKS CRANED, dozens of street children jostle each other for the best view of the colorful stage.

The stars in this performance, which is being held at the University of Manila, are a group of Australian volunteers, dozens of street children from Bahay Tuluyan (BT) and five life-size multi-colored paper men with movable limbs.

With music pounding from the side speakers, the performers start grooving to the beat—hands flying, legs swinging and not enough breath to think straight. This little number is definitely going to be crowd pleaser.

The Aussies are from the Australian Volunteers International (AVI), a nonprofit organization that sends volunteers to assist in development programs worldwide. In the Philippines, AVI has organized a team of Aussie youths aged 18 to 24 to help BT, a child advocacy group that reaches out to street children.

"The partnership between Australian Volunteers International and Bahay Tuluyan is about youth empowering youth. The volunteers assist Bahay Tuluyan, particularly youth facilitators, in implementing education programs, conducting research on the children's needs, and genererally, just having fun and playing games!" says Australian project manager, Catharine Phil, who has been with the group for four years now.

BT, on the other hand, was founded in 1988 as a safe house for street children. Since then, the program has expanded with the opening of centers that offer alternative education, scholarship programs, health, legal and recreational services to street kids in the Metro and other provinces. BT's educators and trainers are young people who themselves were rescued from a life in the streets.

In collaboration with the Philippines Educational and Theatre Group, volunteers from the two groups conduct participatory theater workshops. Every performance promises a riotous affair of mime, music, dance and drama.

FORMER street kids perform with volunteers from Australia and Bahay Tuluyan, a child advocacy group, in front of other street children in Manila.

ELLEN WONG

Theater as an outlet of expression

"Drama is definitely my favorite. I like it very much!" says 16 year-old Tina as she breaks into a wide grin. "They teach us how to act, how to dance, how to sing. It feels so good to do all that because the feelings we have inside of us can come out and find expression in a really great way."

Tina has had a roller coaster life. At the age of five, she lived on the streets, begging and selling fruit to survive. At 12, she was taken into a center where she says she was practically a prisoner because she had "no freedom to leave the building."

At 14, Tina was taken in by BT. She now serves the organization as a youth facilitator while she also attends school.

Phil says that alternative education such as theater is the best way for street children like Tina to move forward.

"The lessons provide a fun and engaging way for the children to express themselves, " she adds. "They also learn basic fundamental values. There are three rules for drama: Respect for self, respect for others and respect for environment. When I ask the kids what they learnt from the lesson, their answer is always immediate: Respect."

The volunteers agree that the theater component of the program is very important.

"There are lots of stubborn kids and they are often difficult to handle. But when it comes to performing, even the coolest kids softened and grew. They were so nervous to perform but after the show, all the other kids were asking for their autographs! It was great!" said AVI member, 22-year-old University of Canberra law student Miah Gibson.

Children helping each other

Another youth facilitator, 21-year-old Diane says: "I only have one wish, I don't want other children to experience what I went through. I was on the streets at 7 years old, selling 'sampaguita' with my two sisters. But this was barely enough to survive. I had to go through the garbage bins for food."

Since BT took her in four years ago, Diane now teaches other children about basic skills and child rights. Her lessons include interactive educational exercises on child labor, child prostitution, health and hygiene.

"My favorite activity is the song where we sing and act out the child's rights song. It is so important that children learn their rights so that they can protect themselves. A child can then feel more confident, I know this from experience," she adds.

"The volunteers also want to help the children. It is good when they come because they make sure the children are cared for and are happy," she tells the INQUIRER.

AVI is sponsoring Diane's trip to Melbourne in April where she will attend an advocacy and training workshop so that she can move one step closer to her dream of becoming social worker.

A bittersweet departure

After Diane closes the show with a Filipino rendition of the child rights song, 6-year-old Sarah, a street child, emerges from a group of children and with a big smile, runs into the arms of Miah. "Ate Miah, how was I?" she asks. "Brilliant!" Miah answers. She turns to this reporter and says that the volunteers, youth facilitators and the children have been up since the early hours of the morning just to practice.

"It's amazing the bonds you form in such a short time. Leaving the children will be the hardest thing." For a moment, her smile falters. "They are so beautiful. It's hard not to become attached. But we will try and keep in contact via e-mail and letters. Hopefully we will be back someday soon," Miah says.

When asked about the impending departure of the volunteers, Sarah's eyes flicker. "We will be sad. But we still have Bahay Tuluyan. They are our family — if not for them, who will believe in us?"

Visit Bahay Tuluyan at: www.bahaytuluyan.org and Australian Volunteers International at: www.australianvolunteers.com

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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

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TORN YANG PHILIPPINES, INC. Mabato Rd., Brgy. Ibayo, Tipas, Pasig City	Wen-Ching Wang	Production Supervisor
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Building, Ayala Ave., Makati City	Edelina Diang	Functional Analyst
L & S LANGUAGE TRAINING CENTER INC. #16 Cabarrus St., Fruition Bldg., BF Homes, Parañaque City	Tae Suk Kim (w/o Park)	Administrative Supervisor
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If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–February 21, 2007)

DID YOU KNOW

WHEN famous architect Francisco "Bobby" Mañosa was asked in 1986 to design a structure commemorating the Edsa Revolution, he initially envisioned a towering cathedral. But because of monetary constraints and other factors, he based the design of the Edsa Shrine in Mandaluyong City on church plazas, as suggested by then Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin. The Edsa Shrine features works of different artists like Virginia Ty-Navarro's bronze statue of the Virgin Mary, National Artist Napoleon Abueva's main altar table and Stations of the Cross, sculptor Ramon Orlina's glass and a stainless steel sculpture of the Risen Christ and other artworks.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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Bidding for the Purchase of:

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The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) through the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) intends to apply the sum of **Three Million Six Hundred Sixty Four Thousand Five Hundred Ninety Pesos (P3,664,590.00) for Various Office Supplies**, being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payment under the contract for purchase of said item. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The PCSO now invites from eligible Bidders for the Bidding of **Various Office Supplies.** The effectivity of the contract will be fifteen (15) calendar days upon receipt of the Purchase Order (PO). The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Instructions to Bidders (ITB).

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and it restricted to Filipino citizens/organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest of outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bid (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PCSO and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of **P3,000.00** from **February 20 to 26, 2007**. The method of payment will be in cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PCSO will hold a Pre-Bidding Conference open to all interested parties on **March 5, 2007, 10:00 a.m.**, at the PCSO Executive Lounge, 4th floor, Main Building, E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City. The deadline for submission of Bids is at **10:00 a.m.** on **March 19, 2007** at the Office of the General Manager located at the 3rd floor of the Main Building. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the same address at 10:30 a.m.

The PCSO reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) **ROSARIO C. URIARTE**
General Manager

(PDI – February 21, 2007)

Withheld burial aid leads to suspension of 2 Pasay employees

By Julie M. Aurelio

TWO PASAY CITY HALL EMployees were suspended for six months for measly sums due families who lost their loved ones.

The city mayor of Pasay has ordered the suspension of two social welfare officials for allegedly not disbursing burial assistance benefits to bereaved residents.

Placed under a 60-day preventive suspension order were Imelda Calixto-Rubiano, head of the Pasay Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) and Dorris Fajardo, a clerk.

Mayor Allan Panaligan issued the preventive suspension order on Feb. 13. Zeny Villaluz will temporarily handle the PSWDO for the duration of Rubiano's suspension.

The two were temporarily relieved of their duties after four residents complained that they did not receive the burial assistance benefits that Rubiano's office was supposed to extend.

In a memorandum furnished to the INQUIRER, Panaligan said the complaints lodged against Rubiano and Fajardo were tantamount to dishonesty and grave misconduct.

Panaligan said the two employees directly violated Section 22 (a) and (b) of the Civil Service Law.

Rubiano is a sister of dismissed Pasay City Vice Mayor Antonino Calixto.

In separate affidavits filed early this month, Herminia Bajado of Maricaban, Pilar Diamante of Barrio Pilipino, and Juanito Obera of Cuenca St. complained that they did not receive the P300 burial assistance due them.

Shain Kingking of Barrio Pilipino also denied that her family received P500 as assistance from Rubiano's office last year.

The complainants, whose relatives all died in June 2006, said they were surprised to learn that they had received the P300 when a reimbursement expense receipt for the amount was shown to them.

The receipt showed that they received the amount from Rubiano as burial assistance for their families.

The four complainants denied receiving the assistance in their affidavits, saying that the signatures affixed on the receipts were not theirs.

Panaligan also ordered city legal officer Joseph Castillo to conduct an investigation of the case within 45 days.

METROBRIEFS

Man shoots ex-girlfriend, kills self

A 57-YEAR-OLD man killed himself after shooting his former girlfriend in Tondo, Manila yesterday morning. Luis Perez Jr., of 609 Antipolo St., Gagalangin, Tondo, was declared dead on arrival at the Tondo General Hospital, according to Manila Police District probers. Victim Elisa Jabonita, 28, of 2301-A Gen. Lukban St., Gagalangin, Tondo, is now being treated at the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center. Police said the suspect shot the victim, hitting her in the nape, when she refused to reconcile with him. He then ran home and shot himself in the head with his .38 caliber revolver.

Margaux C. Ortiz

New ticket, old names

FIELDING relatives in politics seems to be the trend nowadays and the City of Manila is no exception. Saying he was for continuity, Mayor Lito Atienza announced the complete lineup of the "Buhayin Ang Manila" ticket with his son Ali as candidate for mayor, and Don Bagatsing, scion of the Bagatsing family, as vice mayor. Familiar surnames cropped up on the list of candidates for congressmen and councilors—Pipay Silva, wife of former Councilor Larry "Pipoy" Silva; Councilor Boy Isip's wife Christy; Councilor Danny Varona's daughter Ivy; and Rep. Nestor Ponce's sister, Precie. Former Congressman Dondon Bagatsing, Don's father, is also making a comeback by running for congressman in District 4. During the proclamation, the Atienzas wore similar red and white Hawaiian shirts as supporters cheered. "Continuity is the issue (not dynasties)," as stressed by the city mayor. He touted the tandem of Ali and Don as attractive to voters because "both are young but experienced, tall and good-looking. What more can you ask for?" Those on the Buhayin slate have yet to file their candidacies, but the mayor said they would do so as a group before the deadline on March 29.

Allison W. Lopez

40 killed in Iraq bombings

BAGHDAD—BOMBS EXPLODED across central Iraq on Monday, adding 40 more bloodied corpses to the grim toll of Iraqi dead as rebel groups mounted a vicious challenge to the latest US and Iraqi security plan.

The attacks will in the main be blamed on Sunni insurgents and appear to have been timed to embarrass US and Iraqi commanders as they deploy tens of thousands of troops to try to quell Baghdad's vicious sectarian war.

Five American soldiers were also killed, including two in what the US military dubbed a "coordinated attack on a coalition force combat outpost" in Tarmiyah, around 30 kilometers north of the capital.

Seventeen were also wounded when "insurgents initiated the attack on the outpost with a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonation," a US statement said.

The deaths brought to 3,133 the number of US servicemen and women who have died in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion, according to Pentagon figures.

Iraq's Sunni Waqf, or religious endowment, charged meanwhile that members of a police force had raped a woman in the Al-Amel district in southwestern Baghdad.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki quickly had ordered an investigation into the charges that the woman had been sexually attacked by Iraqi "maintain order forces," the former name of a police unit which has now become part of the national police.

Early Monday, five Iraqi commuters were killed by a bomb that gutted a bus in the mixed but largely Shiite district of Karrada, one day after a double car bombing ripped through a crowd in a city market and killed more than 60 people.

In a second attack, a roadside bomb exploded in the path of a police patrol in nearby Zafaraniyah. It killed three police and three civilians and wounded 40 bystanders, according to a security official.

AFP

AN UNDATED handout photo shows a double statue depicting ancient Egyptian official Ka-Hay, who kept divine records, and his wife, Spri-Ankh. The rare double wooden statue was found in a tomb south of Cairo. REUTERS

Ancient tomb found near Egypt's oldest pyramid

CAIRO—A MUD BRICK TOMB dating back more than 4,000 years has been discovered near Egypt's most ancient pyramid in the Saqqara complex south of Cairo, antiquities official announced Monday.

The tomb, which was found by an Egyptian-Australian mission, belonged to Ka-Hay, who kept divine records, and his wife, said Zahi Hawass, Egypt's antiquities chief.

Excavators found five wooden statues depicting the tomb's owner and his wife in a niche at the tomb's forefront. Among the wooden figures was a unique double statue of a seated Ka-Hay and his wife, Hawass said.

The tomb, which also features two offering tables and a wooden false door, was found near the famous Step Pyramid of King Djoser—believed to be Egypt's oldest pyramid—in the necropolis of King Teti, a funerary area containing scores of burial chambers, false doors that ancient Egyptians said the souls of the dead would use to leave their tombs, and temples.

The necropolis where the mud brick tomb was found is built alongside the collapsed pyramid of Teti, who ruled during ancient Egypt's 6th dynasty, more than 4,300 years ago. The Ka-Hay tomb dates back to the late 5th or early 6th dynasty, Hawass said.

Saqqara, located about 20 kilometers south of Cairo, is one of Egypt's most popular tourist sites and hosts a collection of temples, tombs and funerary complexes. *AP*

Thailand warns public of more terror attacks

BANGKOK—ISLAMIC SEPAratists could stage more "terrorist" attacks, Thailand warned Monday, after nine people were killed in overnight strikes as many Thais began celebrating the Lunar New Year.

Thailand's army chief of staff said the insurgents, who have battled the government for three years in Muslim-majority provinces of southern Thailand, could try to stage new attacks during upcoming Buddhist holidays.

"The violence may increase, and it will be the same kind of terrorist tactics," General Montri Sangkasap told reporters after an emergency security meeting in Bangkok.

Thailand's junta chief, General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, and Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont had summoned military and security chiefs over the attacks that killed nine and wounded 44.

Surayud insisted that no more troops were needed in the region, and said that instead he would pursue his "hearts and minds" campaign to win over the area's residents to the government side.

"Our work now needs to focus on building cooperation between government officials and the people, to get rid of their apprehension of authorities," Surayud said.

The insurgents staged some 49 bombings, shootings and arson attacks late Sunday and early Monday, targeting mainly homes and businesses owned by Buddhists or ethnic Chinese, army officials said.

Three people were killed in shootings and six others in bombings in the 12 hours of violence, the officials told AFP. A total of 44 people were injured, they added.

On Monday evening, four more people were injured when militants staged two more shootings and a bombing in Yala province, police said.

"They want to frighten Buddhists and ethnic Chinese living there so that they will leave the region," Army spokesperson Colonel Acar Tiproch said.

Montri said officials believed the attacks were timed to coincide with the Lunar New Year holiday observed by many ethnic Chinese in Thailand.

"The violence happened because it was a holiday period when there were many people celebrating. We have to be careful during the next religious festivals," especially during important Buddhist celebrations in March and April," Montri said.

The overnight violence marked the bloodiest day in Thailand since bombs in Bangkok on New Year's Eve killed three.

The government has denied a link between the separatist conflict and the Bangkok blasts, but investigators earlier this month indicated that some suspects in the New Year's bombings could have links to the insurgency.

The wave of attacks also came just two days after Surayud said Thailand would accept help from Muslim neighbor Malaysia to try to quell the unrest in the Muslim-majority provinces, which has claimed nearly 2,000 lives since 2004. *AFP*

India, Pakistan push peace talks

NEW DELHI—TRADITIONAL foes India and Pakistan were planning Tuesday to push ahead with their on-off peace process despite a terror attack that left 67 people dead on a train from New Delhi to Lahore.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said he would not be scared away from scheduled peace talks in the Indian capital this week by the inferno that charred bodies beyond recognition.

And India's foreign ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna confirmed the sixth round of the Joint Indo-Pakistan Commission would go ahead as planned.

Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who visited Pakistan last month, was to head the Indian team in the two-day talks from Wednesday.

Kasuri was due to arrive in India on Tuesday ahead of the negotiations, part of a process which has struggled to register much progress since its launch in January 2004.

He called the attack a "horrendous act of terrorism" and said most victims were Pakistanis returning home.

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf added: "We will not allow elements which want to sabotage the ongoing peace process to succeed in their nefarious designs.

"Such wanton acts of terrorism will only serve to further strengthen our resolve to attain … sustainable peace between the two countries." The "Friendship Express" which was firebombed at midnight Sunday as it headed for Pakistan, just 100 kilometers north of New Delhi, had been one of the few successes of confidence-building measures between the neighbors.

The twice-weekly train link was opened in 1976 and was carrying more than 750 Pakistanis and Indians when attacked.

Tensions had disrupted the service at the height of an armed insurgency in northern Punjab state in 1984 and again in January 2002 after an attack on the Indian parliament which was blamed on militants based in Pakistan.

The express trains resumed in January 2004 after the two countries launched the latest peace process.

Foreign capitals urged New Delhi and Islamabad to redouble their work for peace after the attack, for which no group has claimed responsibility. *AFP*

Briton aims to be first woman to reach both poles

LONDON—A BRITISH EXPLORer left London for Toronto last Friday ahead of her bid to become the first woman to trek solo to the North Pole.

Starting on March 4, Rosie Stancer, 47, will attempt to haul two sledges from Ward Hunt Island on the northern tip of Canada over 770 kilometers of the frozen Arctic Ocean to the pole, taking 60 days.

Laid neatly on a deserted London office floor in parallel lines designed to meet at the North Pole, 60 days' worth of energy-charged packages wait for Stancer.

Each contains roughly five and half thousand calories in various forms, including fudge from the Prince of Wales's Highgrove estate. Together they are designed to fuel the diminutive 47-year-old Briton across land, ice and through water in her epic bid to become the first woman to journey alone to both poles.

The explorer will need to consume four liters of liquid and nearly 6,000 calories per day as she walks, ski climbs and swims to the geographic North Pole.

The diminutive mother will achieve a double world first if successful—she would become the first woman to walk solo to both poles. Stancer skied solo and without re-supply to the South Pole in 2003-2004.

The explorer said she felt "very excited, determined and ready" as she left London Heathrow Airport. *AFP, Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Chlorine gas tanker explodes in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Six people were killed and at least 105 wounded or overcome by fumes on Tuesday when a chlorine gas tanker exploded in the town of Taji, north of Baghdad, security and defense sources said. The explosion occurred after a driver parked his truck in front of the Shiite-owned Ahal Al-Bait restaurant, they said, suggesting that the blast had the hallmarks of a sectarian attack. Among the injured were women and children who were overcome by gas fumes, the security source said. He said his service had reports that four such trucks were to be driven to Baghdad from the insurgent bastion of Ramadi in western Iraqi by foreign suicide bombers, and that this truck might have been one of them. *AFP*

Sketches of India bomb suspects released

NEW DELHI—Police in India released sketches on Tuesday of two men believed to have jumped off a train bound for Pakistan shortly before two suitcase bombs exploded, sparking a fire that killed 68 people. "Around 11:30 (p.m.), these people got down, and the blasts happened 15 minutes later," police Inspector-General Sharad Kumar told a televised news conference in Panipat town, close to the site of the blasts some 80 km (50 miles) outside New Delhi. One of the men was around 35 or 36 years old, "plumpish" and dark, with a moustache, the second around 26 or 27, wearing a scarf wrapped around his head, Kumar said. Both men were speaking the local Hindi language. *Reuters*

3 foreign workers kidnapped in Nigeria

PORT HARCOURT—Gunmen kidnapped two Croatian and one Montenegrin oil worker from a bar in Nigeria's oil city Port Harcourt, authorities said on Monday. "The kidnappers have not yet made any demands but we expect that this is about ransom," Croatian Deputy Foreign Minister Vinko Ljubicic told state news agency Hina. Their employer had earlier said he thought all three men were Croatian. The managing director of offshore oil services company Hydrodive Nigeria, David Ross, said they were contracted to work on one of the company's vessels. Independent Croatian news website Index.hr quoted Croatian employment agency Mariner, which sent the two Croatians to Nigeria, as saying negotiations had started with the abductors. *Reuters*

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines
Telephones (632) 5513438 • 5513454 • Facsimile (632) 5513436
E-mail: info@peza.gov.ph • website: www.peza.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Operation & Maintenance of Pump Stations, Water Distribution System, STP, & Transmission Lines at the Cavite Economic Zone
(PEZA-HO-2007-02)

1. The PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY (PEZA), through its Corporate Budget for the CY 2007 intends to apply the sum of PhP7,304,718.13 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Operation & Maintenance of Pump Stations, Water Distribution System, STP, & Transmission Lines at the Cavite Economic Zone. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PEZA now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the operation and maintenance of CEZ's pump stations and sewerage treatment plants, its electro-mechanical components, equipment, safety devices, and control panel system twenty-four (24) hours daily. This includes the repair and maintenance of water and sewerage distribution/transmission lines, including installation/disconnection of water meters twenty-six (26) days each month for a period of one (1) year. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a single similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the ABC and at least five (5) years experience in the operation and maintenance industry. In addition, bidders must have filed their latest annual income tax returns and business tax returns (VAT and/or Percentage Taxes for the previous 6 months) via the Electronic Filing and Payment System (eFPS) of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from PEZA and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from **14-28 February 2007, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays to Fridays** from the address below upon submission of a certified copy of their Phil-GEPS Certificate of Registration and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos Only (PhP 5,000.00). The method of payment will be on a cash basis only. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PEZA will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **06 March 2007, 2:00 p.m.** at the 6th Floor, Social Hall, PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **11:00 a.m. of 21 March 2007**. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of not less than 2.5% of the ABC or in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit in the amount of not less than *1% of the ABC*. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on **21 March 2007** at **2:00** p.m. at the 6th Floor Social Hall, PEZA Bldg. III, Roxas Blvd. corner San Luis St., Pasay City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. In case any of the above dates is declared a special non-working holiday, it will automatically be reset on the next working day.
10. The PEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority
Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat
3/F PEZA Building, Roxas Boulevard corner San Luis St., Pasay City
Tel. No. 891-6444 / Telefax No. 551-9587
e-mail: **poza bac secretariat@yahoo.com**
website: **www.peza.gov.ph**

(PDI–February 14 & 21, 2007)

PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY
MARSMAN BUILDING 22 MUELLE DE SAN FRANCISCO SOUTH HARBOR PORT AREA MANILA 1018, PHILIPPINES
TEL NO (0632) 527-8356 – 527-8375, FAX NO 527-4856, http://www.ppa.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

MANAGEMENT, OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND PROMOTION OF PHASE II (CONTAINER TERMINAL A-1) AT THE PORT OF BATANGAS.

1. The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) has constructed a container berth and terminal (Container Terminal "A-1") in the Port of Batangas under the Batangas Port Development Project Phase II through the financial assistance of the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC).
2. The PPA thru the Special Bids and Awards Committee (SBAC) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and shortlisting for the management, operation, maintenance, development, and promotion of Phase II (Container Terminal A-1) at the Port of Batangas.
3. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs not later than **March 14, 2007, 4:00 p.m.**, delivered by hand, through mail, or by facsimile, at Room 201, Office of the AGM for Operations, 2nd Floor Marsman Building, 22 Muelle de San Francisco, Gate 1, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila, Philippines, and secure the Eligibility Documents therefrom upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P10,000.00 (VAT exclusive).
4. The last day of submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents, scheduled on **March 15, 2007, 2:00 p.m.** at the Board Room, 5th Floor Marsman Building, 22 Muelle de San Francisco, Gate 1, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila, Philippines. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on non-discretionary "Pass/Fail" criteria. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents.
5. The SBAC shall draw up the short list of bidders from those who have submitted LOIs and have been determined as eligible in accordance with the provisions of PPA Administrative Order No. 01-2006. The short list shall consist of seven (7) prospective bidders. The criteria and rating system for short listing shall be as follows:

a.	Track record of the cargo handler and associates, in case of joint ventures, considering both the overall experience of the bidder	15%
b.	Qualification of key officers	50%
c.	Capitalization	35%

6. Only those who are short listed will be entitled to submit bids. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive procedures as specified in PPA Administrative Order No. 01-2006.
7. The contract will only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during the post-qualification.
8. The cost of bidding documents shall be a non-refundable amount of P50,000.00 (VAT exclusive).
9. The cargo handling contract shall be for a period of twenty five (25) years.
10. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the PPA at the address given below from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
11. A Pre-Eligibility Conference is set on Monday, **March 12, 2007, 2:00 p.m.** at the Board Room, 5th Floor Marsman Building, 22 Muelle de San Francisco, Gate 1, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila, Philippines, to discuss, among others, matters relative to the eligibility requirements and other relevant eligibility matters.
12. PPA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, annul the bidding process, or award the contract at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

MR. BENJAMIN B. CECILIO
Chairperson
Special Bids and Awards Committee
Philippine Ports Authority
Room 201, Office of the AGM for Operations
2nd Floor Marsman Building, 22 Muelle de San Francisco
South Harbor, Port Area
Manila, Philippines
Email Address: bbc@ppa.com.ph
Telephone No.: (02) 527-4726
Fax No.: (02) 527-6445

Signature of SBAC Chairperson or
Authorized Representative of the SBAC
Chairperson

(PDI–Feb. 21 & March 7, 2007)

MidEast summit ends with little progress

JERUSALEM—US SECRETARY OF STATE CONdoleezza Rice held a rare summit with Israeli and Palestinian leaders on Monday but achieved little concrete progress in reviving the peace process other than a pledge for further talks.

Rice said all sides had discussed a future Palestinian state at the first such meeting in nearly four years, but warned that peace would not come through terror, in a clear reference to the dominant Islamist movement Hamas.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas agreed to meet again "soon," Rice said, adding that she also planned to return to the region to pursue peace efforts.

Hopes of a breakthrough in Middle East peacemaking have been complicated by a deal between Abbas and Hamas—blacklisted by the West as a terrorist group—to form a unity government in a bid to end a crippling aid boycott.

After the talks, Olmert insisted Israel would not cooperate with any government that did not meet international demands for peace, while Hamas lashed out at what it labeled US isolationism and "blackmail."

Ismail Haniya, the head of the outgoing Hamas-dominated cabinet who will also lead the new unity administration, said he "regretted that the American administration always behaves according to the logic of isolation and boycott which has proved to be a failure."

Abbas's office announced that the president would head to Britain, Germany and France later in the week to press for a more welcoming approach to the new government from the European Union.

"All three of us affirmed our commitment to a two-state solution, agreed that a Palestinian state cannot be born of violence and terror, and reiterated our acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the roadmap," Rice said after more than two-and-a-half hours of talks in a Jerusalem hotel.

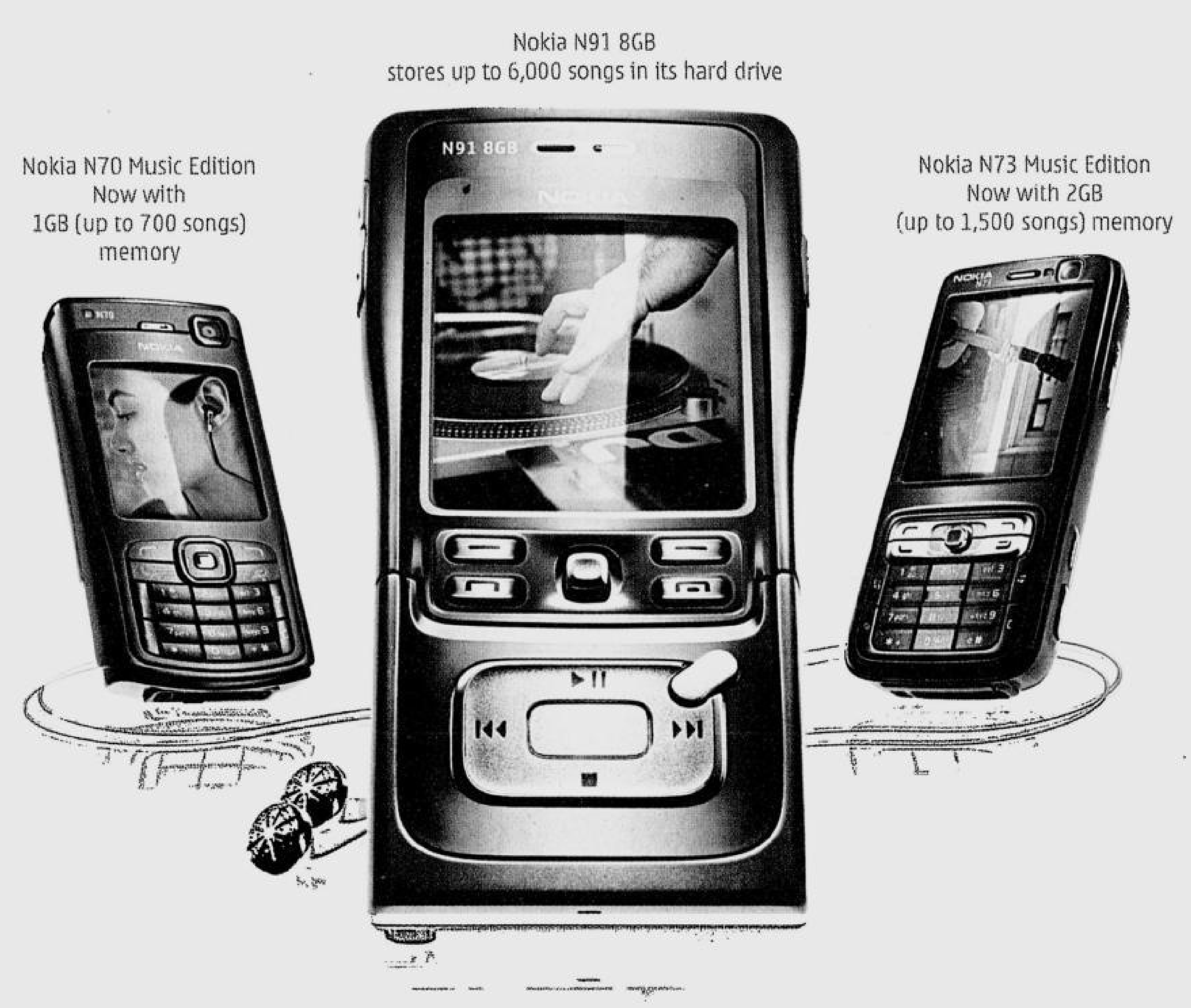
Monday's meeting was the first of its kind since 2003 when Rice's predecessor, Colin Powell, met Olmert's predecessor, Ariel Sharon and Abbas, then Palestinian prime minister.

Rice denied it had been thin on outcome.

"I certainly think that it had a confidence-building outcome because, again, this is a period of considerable uncertainty and I'm not sure when they would have sat down to try to come to terms with some of those uncertainties, to try to get answers to each others' questions," she said.

A senior US official said the Israeli and Palestinian leaders had agreed to meet again within weeks. But Rice's visit, her 10th to Jerusalem as secretary of state and her fourth in just five months, comes with both Olmert and Abbas weakened by political struggles at home.

AFP



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New Nokia Nseries range shines spotlight on music

Special black editions of Nokia N70, Nokia N73 and Nokia N91 8GB offer ultimate mobile music experiences

Manila, Philippines - Nokia unveiled music editions of three Nokia Nseries multimedia computers, the Nokia N70 Music Edition, Nokia N73 Music Edition and Nokia N91 8GB. The Nokia Nseries Music Range combines sleek black design with heightened mobile music experiences appealing to the music enthusiast in everyone. Key benefits include dedicated music access keys, Nokia PC Suite and new software for easy synchronization and music management, and additional storage capacity - with an 8GB hard drive, the Nokia N91 8GB is a fully-loaded music machine!

"Music is an essential part of our daily lives and it has the power to evoke memories and change moods," said Ako Shiraogawa, Director, Multimedia Computers, Nokia Asia Pacific. "With our new Nokia Nseries Music Range, we hope to enhance those personal experiences and make them even more special. For instance, you can receive recommendations from independent music experts with Music Recommenders, add song after song thanks to additional memory capacity, and easily manage and synchronize your favorite tunes with your mobile device. These benefits and many more make our new Music Range the ultimate for mobile music experiences."

Whether you're sitting on the bus or walking down the street, you can now enjoy your music more conveniently. Your favourite tunes are only one touch away with dedicated music access keys. Managing your music is further simplified with the integrated music player. From the music menu you can build and edit play lists on the fly. It's also a breeze to rip your CDs, synchronize them with your device, and start grooving on the go with the Nokia Music Manager, a part of Nokia PC Suite.

In addition, the Nokia N70 Music Edition, Nokia N73 Music Edition and Nokia N91 8GB have more memory for all those have-to-have songs, with up to 1GB, 2GB and 8GB respectively. With support for the two most popular music formats worldwide, MP3 and AAC, no song should go unheard. For enhanced sound quality you can use a compatible high quality headphone with the standard 3.5mm stereo headset plug.

Furthermore, with web connectivity you can enjoy high quality music on the go. You can easily access the latest news on your favorite artists, buy upcoming concert tickets, and hear the latest tracks - all at your fingertips. Experiences such as podcasting, Stereo FM radio with Station Directory and Visual Radio, and Music Recommenders, further push the boundaries of mobile music.

Nokia N91 8GB: Jukebox in your pocket

The iconic Nokia N91 8GB offers the best music experience for mobile. With an 8GB hard drive you get up to 6000* songs. Features such as dedicated music keys, premium inbox music-optimized headset with remote control, ynchronization with Windows Media Player, and Bluetooth connectivity support combined with the other essential ingredients that make up the Nokia Nseries Music Range, the new Nokia N91 8GB is a true jukebox in your pocket.

Nokia N73 Music Edition: Digital meets audio

The Nokia N73 Music Edition is a stunning multimedia computer with up to 2GB of memory, integrated stereo speakers for optimized audio pleasure, and easy synchronization with Windows Media Player. With support for MP3, AAC, AAC+, eAAC+ and WMA, you can choose how you rip your tunes and play them. Complemented with exquisite photography features such as a 3.2 megapixel camera with Carl Zeiss optics and autofocus, the Nokia N73 Music Edition is a bona fide marriage of digital and audio.

Nokia N70 Music Edition: All-in-one music player

Up to 1GB memory, the Nokia N70 Music Edition gives you more music in your pocket. You can personalize your music with a choice of digital music tracks and press the music key for direct access to them. Also, use the music-optimized headset with remote control for easy access. With these enhanced music capabilities, this compact package has high-performance multimedia at its core.

The Nokia N70 Music Edition and Nokia N73 Music Edition are expected to become commercially available in October 2006 and the Nokia N91 8GB by end 2006, with estimated, unsubsidized sales prices of approximately 350, 450 and 550 euros respectively.

A complete list of the Nokia Nseries Music Range features and technical specifications can be found at http://www.nokia.com/press/openstudio2006.

*Capacity based on 3:45 mins per song and 48 kbps eAAC+ encoding. Capacity with 128 kbps AAC encoding is up to 2000 songs.

ADVT

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Crucial Game 5 for Kings, Beermen today /A28

THE 60TH PAL Interclub regular competition takes flight as PAL president Jaime Bautista makes the ceremonial drive. JESS YUSON

‘Canlubang still team to beat’

By Ernesto A. Gonzales

CAGAYAN DE ORO—IT’S ANOTHER three-horse race with defending champion Canlubang the wise money choice over Manila Southwoods and co-host Del Monte when the 60th Philippine Airlines Interclub golf championship starts here today.

“Canlubang is still the team to beat,” said Southwoods team captain Thirdy Escano, who will decide his starting five-man lineup for the initial round at the Del Monte course in Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, after a final pow-wow with his boys over dinner.

Escano’s respect for the Laguna-based team is buttressed by the fact that the Southwoods aces were handily beaten by their Canlubang counterparts playing under the Nike banner in both centerpiece divisions of the Fil-Am Golf Invitational in Baguio only last December.

But he stressed that his youth-laden squad from Carmona, Cavite, which includes 10-year-old Miggy Alejandro, has what it takes to unseat Canlubang based on last year’s tournament where Southwoods even took the lead in the third round before losing by six on the final day.

“I don’ think, I know we have a chance (of winning),” said Escano, who will count heavily on Asian Gamers Michael Bibat and Gene Bondoc and the promising Tonlits Asistio.

He said that Miggy, a Grade IV La Salle student who will go into the record books as the youngest participant in the men’s tournament, “may not score well but this a chance to expose him.”

Del Monte also has no fear of Canlubang as it listed Boboy Jaraula, Ondoy Mondilla, Ben Minoza, 19-year-old club champion Banny Abanio and Belem Arancon to take care of the scoring on their home course for two rounds.

“We planned it that way,” said playing team captain Yoyong Velez, who will lead the other half of the Del Monte lineup in tomorrow’s action at Pueblo de Oro. “But we will make adjustments after the second round if necessary.”

The Del Monte bets banked on their familiarity with the heavily wooded course to rule the championship in 2004 where they went wire-to-wire after compiling an unprecedented 156 points from a 12-under-par total score by their four top players in the first round.

Canlubang team captain Luigi Yulo also underscored the importance of a good start, saying the opening assignments will be decided on who plays best on the two

CANLUBANG/A00

Reyes won’t coach Seaba RP five; squad a mix of pros, amateurs

By June Navarro

CONTRARY TO POPULAR DEMAND, Chot Reyes will not call the shots for the national team in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships.

And neither will an all-professional squad play there.

The five-man BAP-Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas committee tasked to find the best man for the Seaba coaching portfolio instead designated Reyes to appoint the person who will handle the national squad for the qualifying tournament of the Fiba-Asia tilt.

The committee, headed by Philippine Basketball League commissioner Chino Trinidad, also decided to form a composite team of at least six amateur dribblers either from the Philippine Basketball League or the collegiate ranks to be reinforced by PBA players.

The selection committee for the Seaba was composed of Air21 president Lito Alvarez, Tanduay president Wilson Young, Ateneo's Junjun Capistrano, Christian Tan and Chino Trinidad.

The development popped the pro league's desire to field a national team made up of PBA stars. PBA officials have already drawn up plans for the national team which will see action in the Seaba to be held in Bangkok on May 24-28.

"Before coming up with the decision, we consulted all the parties concerned and the committee felt that the level of competition in the Seaba is too shallow for a team made up of professionals," Trinidad told the INQUIRER.

"Anyway, Chot (Reyes) will still have his thumb mark on the team. He will appoint the coach familiar with his system for the Seaba tournament."

Reyes was steadfast in his plan to field an all-pro team, Trinidad said, because not doing so would give the national squad for the Fiba-Asia event "one less tournament to prepare with."

To make up for that, Alvarez, who raised the motion to have Reyes name a coach to handle the Seaba five, said the country could invite Asian squads to a tournament held in the country. This will give the Fiba-Asia bound national squad a more competitive tournament

REYES/ A28

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PBL not happy with PBA program

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball League is far from thrilled with an apprentice program that entices the country's top amateur players to suit up in the pro league without passing through the regular draft.

According to PBL chair Virgilio Angeles, the program that aims to tap standouts like JC Intal, Ken Bono, Jason Castro, Marvin Cruz, Mark Borboran and JR Quiñahan "benefits only the PBA."

In a released statement yesterday, Angeles said the league remains "committed to helping the national team program," but expressed disappointment on the pro league's failure to consult the PBL team owners.

"It seems the PBA did not even think of us as their partners in the long-term development program of the sport," said Angeles.

The PBA board of governors recently approved the apprentice program that will allow PBA teams to fill in the slots vacated by the pro cagers tapped to represent the country in the Southeast Asian Basketball Association and Fiba-Asia tourna-

PBL/ A26

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Bangkok paper says Payla, Tipon positive for dope

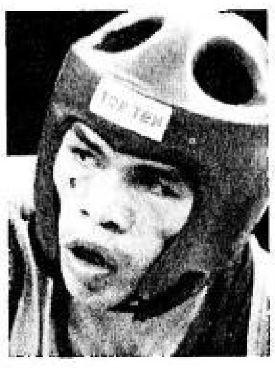
'I'll jump from 7th floor if report is true'–Lopez

By Dennis U. Eroa, *Libre sports editor*

HE HATES MAKING STUNTS, BUT AMATEUR BOXING ASSOCIATION of the Philippines Manny T. Lopez yesterday said he's willing to jump from a tall building if Doha Asian Games gold medalists Joan Tipon and Violito Payla will be stripped of their medals due to doping.

Reacting to an article which came out Feb. 14 in The Nation, Bangkok's English newspaper,. Lopez said the claims were product of "hallucinating minds."

TIPON



PAYLA

"Never in the history of ABAP that its boxers used performance-enhancing drugs," said Lopez. "I'm going to jump from the seventh floor of a building if this report is true," said Lopez.

He also challenged those behind the report to jump if they will be proven wrong.

"Let me say to those manufacturing these lies to also jump," said Lopez.

According to the report, Payla, winner of the flyweight gold, and bantamweight champion Tipon will be stripped of their medals if their B samples are found positive.

The story was not bylined. It mentioned the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA) although no single official from boxing's governing body was identified.

Lopez declined to identify the officials involved in the story but he noted that Thailand is still smarting from its defeat in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games and the Doha Asiad Games.

"We've unseated the Thais in the battle for overall honors in the SEA Games and again overshadowed them in Doha," said Lopez.

The Philippines (2-0-2 gold-silver-bronze) placed third overall behind Uzbekistan (3-1-2) and China (2-0-3) in the Asian Games.

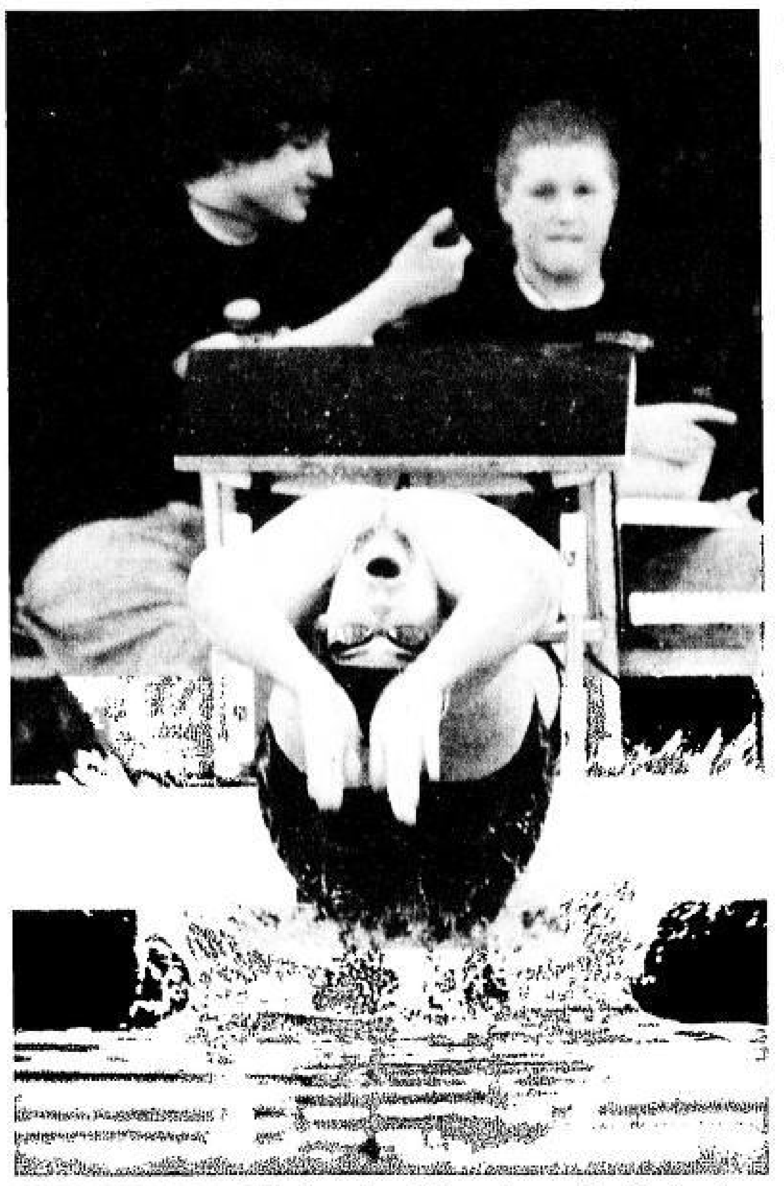
Thai officials which made a pre-Asiad prediction of at least five golds, fell flat on their faces when they pocketed a single gold courtesy of light-welterweight Manus Boonjumnong.

The AIBA medical commission is headed by Dr. Ed Van Wijk of the Netherlands. It recognizes two types of doping controls which are in and out competitions testing.

"Tipon and Payla passed the tests with flying colors in Doha. All the competing boxers were tested. My question is: why concentrate on our gold medalists," Lopez asked.

Lopez also noted that the Aiba itself, the Olympic Council of Asia and the World Anti-Doping Agency have not informed Abap regarding the violations.

"We've won the golds through hard work, patience and a solid training program. The story is most unfair and contrary to Olympic ideals," said Lopez.



SUPERSTAR: Michael Phelps takes off from the starting block as he competes in the 100-meter backstroke during the Missouri Grand Prix nationals swimming competition, Monday at the University of Missouri Aquatic Center in Columbia, Mo. Phelps won the event with a time of 54.46 seconds. Phelps, who won six gold medals at the Athens Olympics, also topped the 100m butterfly in 52.33 seconds, the 100 back, the 400 individual medley, 200 freestyle and set a world record of 1:53.71 in the 200 butterfly on Saturday. AP

Federer ties Connors mark

LONDON—ROGER FEDERER tied Jimmy Connors' record of 160 consecutive weeks as the top-ranked player in men's tennis Monday.

The 10-time Grand Slam champion has held the No. 1 ATP tour ranking since Feb. 2, 2004. The Swiss star is assured of breaking the record next week.

"Breaking records and doing something that hasn't been done for a long time, it's really nice," Federer said recently.

Connors was No. 1 from July 1974 to August 1977. He is now coaching one of Federer's biggest rivals, Andy Roddick.

Federer, who has won six of the last seven Grand Slam titles, hasn't played since beating Fernando Gonzalez in the Australian Open final on Jan. 28. He returns to action next week at the Dubai Open.

Federer has 8,120 points in the year-based rankings. Rafael Nadal, the man who beat Federer at the French Open last year, is second with 4,705 points. Nadal also beat Federer in the Dubai Open final last year.

The 25-year-old Federer has dominated tennis for the past three seasons, but is still trying to win a Grand Slam title on clay. *AP*

Montiel hides fight arsenal, checks weight

BANILAD, CEBU—WBO SUPERFLY CHAMP Fernando Montiel yesterday showed up at the Fight Club here for a brief public workout, but refused to hit the mitts and heavy bags to keep his fighting arsenal under wraps as he girds for a titular defense against Cebuano Z 'The Dream' Gorres on Saturday at the Cebu City Sports Complex.

Montiel, closely surrounded by his father-trainer Manuel and his three brothers, did a light shadow-boxing in front of television crews and cameramen, but did nothing after that except to pose for photos with boxing fans.

"No, no, no," said Montiel's father Manuel when asked if he could let his son do the mitts.

The Mexican world champion, according to his father, is now at 117 lbs, just two pounds over the regulatory weight limit, and should not find any difficulties when he takes to the scales this Friday for the official weigh-in at the Rajah Park Hotel.

Team Montiel then went down to the ground floor of the Banilad Trade Center after the brief workout, where a television crew from ABS-CBN was conducting a live news broadcast.

Meanwhile, WBO president for Asia Pacific Leon Panoncillo, who will supervise the world title bout, is expected to hit town today, as well as WBO president Paco Valcarcel.

Also expected to arrive is Colombian Feider Viloria, although organizers could not tell the exact arrival details due to transit visa problems Team Viloria encountered in Europe. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

PBL not ...

From page A25

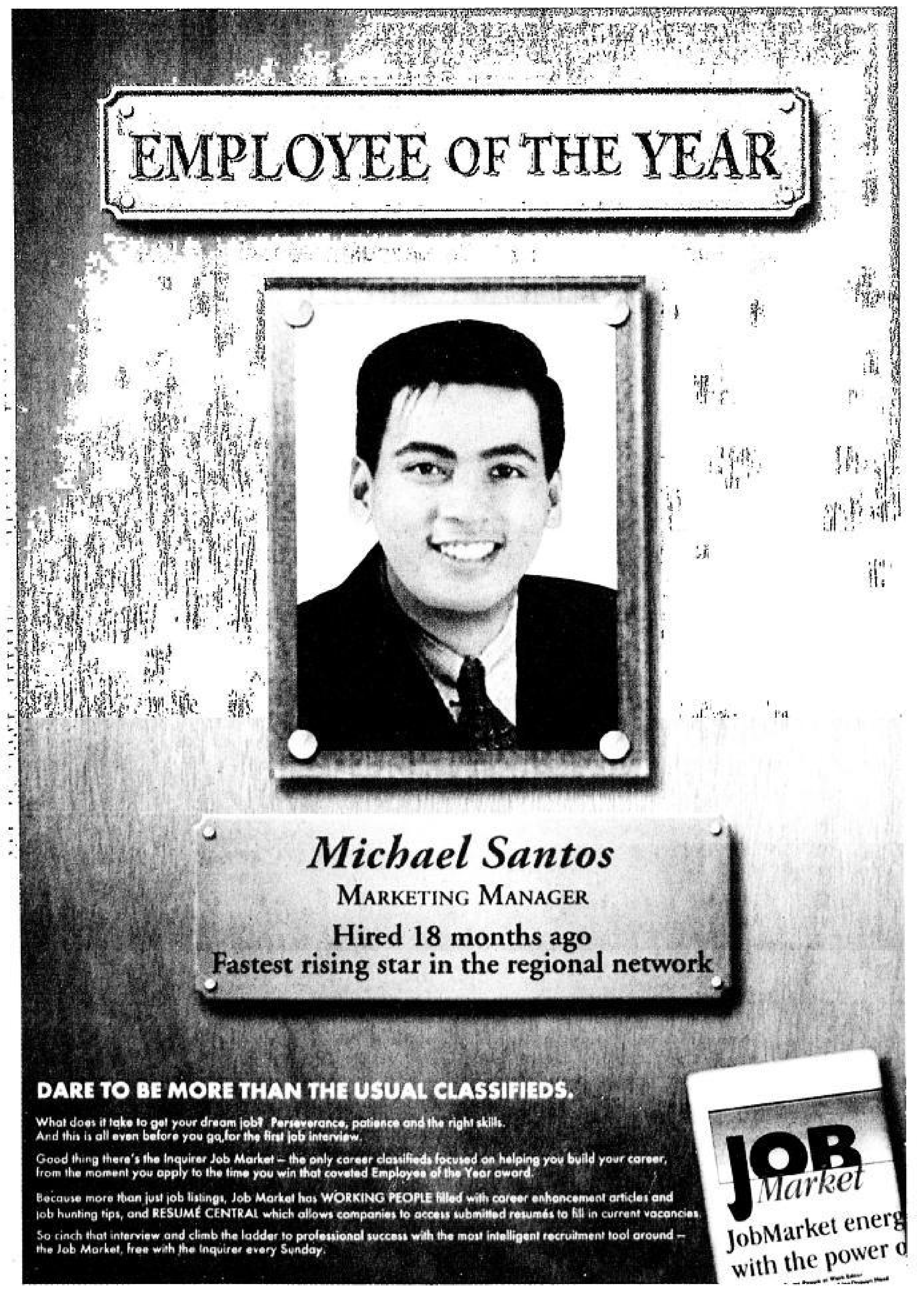
ments.

"Most of these players will be available for the draft, which is just months away," said Angeles. "Most only have one conference left with the PBL teams and we look forward to them showing what they can do to the PBA teams and their scouts. Do we really need to rush them when so many other talented players are languishing on their reserve and free agent lists?"

The PBL team owners were also displeased with the better compensation the PBA is offering to the young cagers, noting that it only "ferments disinterest and unrest among our players."

PBA commissioner Noli Eala said that players selected in the apprentice program will be getting a maximum P40,000 monthly educational assistance, medical insurance coverage and other perks and bonuses.

"We try to inculcate in these players the proper values which include patience, loyalty and respect," said Angeles. "What the PBA did is sending them the wrong message."



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'Canlubang still team to beat'

From page A25

courses.

"If we grab even a slight edge after the first round then we will have the psychological advantage," said Yulo, whose lineup boasts the red-hot Jay Bayron, who won the national amateur championship last December then emerged low amateur in the Philippine Open last month.

Canlubang is seeking to raise its leading record of titles to 14 while gunning for a second straight championship double following its victory in the Seniors tournament for players 55 years and above last Sunday.

Also to be disputed are titles in the Founders, Sportswriters and Friendship divisions.

Meanwhile, Jaime J. Bautista, PAL president and chief operating officer, led the ceremonial hitting of the first ball to formally launch what is generally acknowledged as the national golf team championship yesterday morning.

Also doing the honors were PAL Interclub chair Domingo Duerme, Pueblo de Oro Golf Club chair Roland Ramos, Del Monte Phils. Inc. assistant general manager Henry T. Lao; Justice Rodrigo F. Lim Jr. of the Court of Appeals and Ruben V. Vegaria, immediate past president of the Cagayan de Oro Chamber of Commerce and Industy.

SPORTSWATCH

Dragons vs Stallions

CHIANG KAI SHEK COACH SONNY CO HAS ONE wish when his Dragons clash with the Xavier School Golden Stallions in their best-of-three finals series in the 31st Hitachi-Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball Association Junior Basketball Championship at 6 p.m. today at the CKSC gym. He hopes that the outcome would be different from last year and that this time around, they will be able to snatch the title the Golden Stallions took away from them. "This will be our second fight for the championship. I hope the result will be different," said Co after the Dragons posted their seventh straight win—a 94-62 whipping of Grace Christian School in the semifinals.

GCAP 5-cock derby

THE WINNINGEST GAMEBIRDS WILL BE unleashed anew at San Juan Coliseum today when the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines(GCAP) 5-cock derby starts at 5 p.m., featuring 70 fights. The one-day event will be the fourth of 10 GCAP derbies lined up for the 2007 cock season. The first three legs produced only one champion: Totoy Haruta's Rainier (first leg); Boy Royo and Lito Orillaza's Makisig WTJ (second) and Rodolfo Pineda's San Juan International Derby (third). Meanwhile, a special 2-cock ulutan will be held at SJC starting tomorrow, and every Thursday thereafter.

Largahan submission today

OFFICIAL ENTRIES IN THE LARGAHAN 5-COCK derby, a super cockfest scheduled at Roligon Mega cockpit, must be submitted today from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Backed by Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enertone, the four day event (Feb. 22, 24, 26 and 28) starts tomorrow with the 2- cock elimination round featuring over 100 fights. Entry fee is P4,400 and minimum bet P3,300. A participant may field two or three entries, said host Rolly Ligon. The winners stand to receive no less than P2 million in guaranteed prize. For the fastest win champion, a brand new Toyota Avanza 1.5 awaits as bonus. Call 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812 (Jona, Shirley or Tiling).

UGBA Heritage Cup

THE NEWLY FORMED UNITED GAMECOCK BREEDers Assocciation (UGBA), headed by Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) Peping Cojuangco, will present the first ever UGBA Heritage Cup 8-cock/bullstag derby beginning on Mar. 27 at the Araneta Coliseum. According to Rene "Boy" Diaz, president of the Luzon Gamecock Breeders Association (LGBA) and spokesman of UGBA, 18 gamecock breeders associations have banded together to form the UGBA. A guaranteed prize of P5 million awaits the winners for an entry fee of P11,000. Elimination rounds (4-cock/bullstag) sizzles at the Araneta Coliseum on Mar. 27 and 29; Apr. 10, 12, 17, 19 and 24. Call 926-7808 or 924-5072 or 0920-5851940 (Taz Lunasco).

Araneta hosts 5-cocker

A 5-COCK DERBY WITH A GUARANTEED PRICE OF P1 million will be held tomorrow at the Araneta Coliseum. Hosted by Osang De La Cruz of Goldquest Champions, it will have an entry fee of P20,000 and minimum bet of P11,000. The winning handler gets P70,000 and the winning gaffer P30,000. Submission of weights will be from 2-9 p.m. today. For reservation of cockhouses, call 911-2928 (Boy San Pedro).

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Scarab (4), Take A Strike (5), Golden Lance (1), Words of Joy (6)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Princess Leighla (3), Top Most (9), Batang Kalookan (7), Capricorn Aida (1), American Idol (4)

Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Prince Aidan (11), Friendly Venture (2), Odyssey (12), Batangas Force (5), Spark (8)

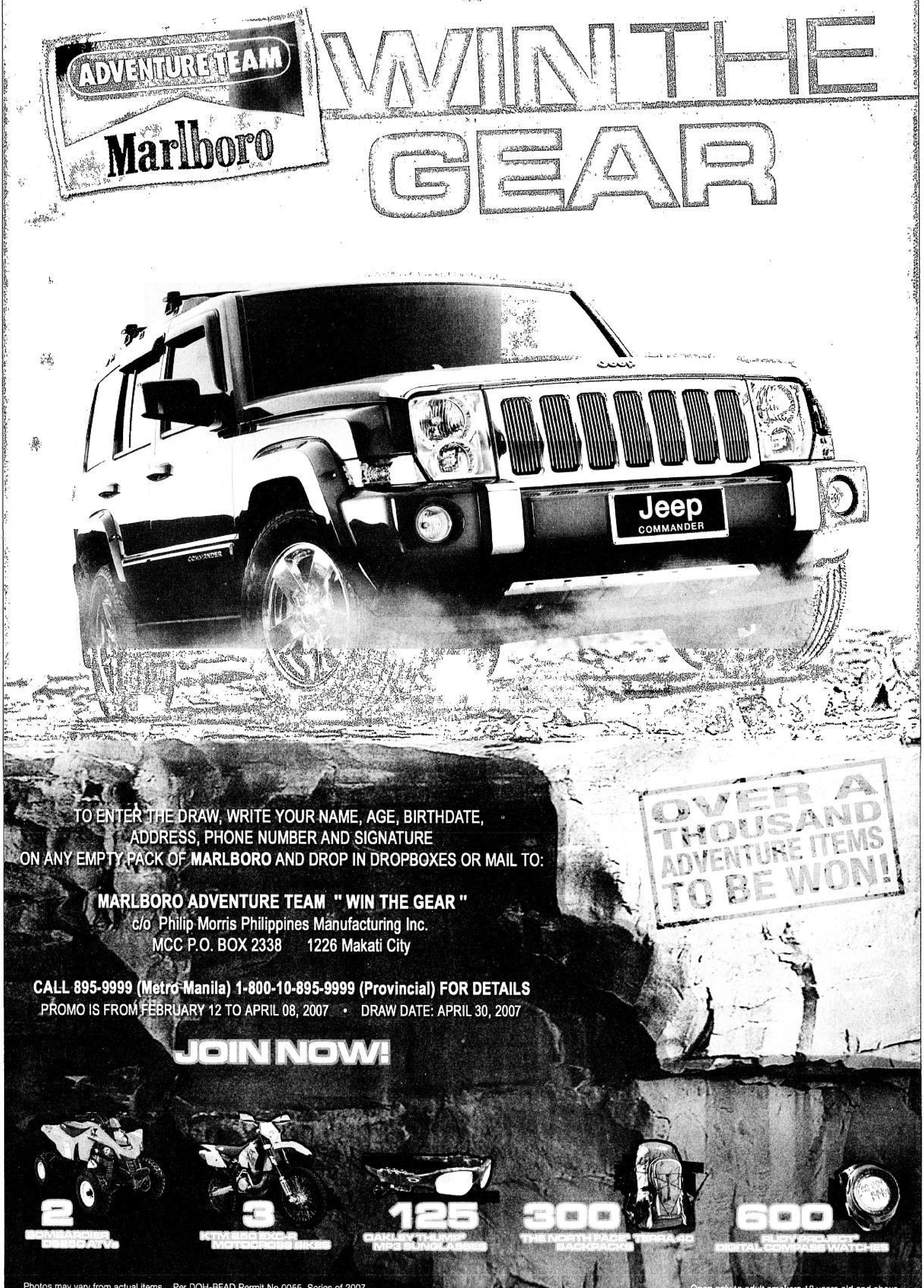
Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Batang Westside (12), Karma (9), Key Element (11), Freedom Charger (4), Rockwell (3)

Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Cheska Run (4), Jay Nicole (8), Strong Red (6), Santiago (3)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Lady Cathy/My Rabbonnie (6), Piroutte (10), Red Hot Water (3), Advance Party (8), West N Wild (4)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Fine Officer (10), Carlito's Way (3), Top Quest (10), Kawiliwili (6), Kalashnikov (5), Seven Lakes (9)

Race 8—(Super Six/Qrt/Tri)—Sunline (5), At All Cost (8), Sweet Talk (11), Hazit Coming (12), Kim Possible (13), Cyrstal City (10)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SPORTS

Crucial Game 5 today

Streaking Kings, Beermen to break 2-2 tie

GAME TODAY (*Araneta Coliseum*)
7 p.m.—San Miguel vs. Barangay Ginebra

AFTER WINNING THE LAST two games of the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup title series by a combined 65 points, Jong Uichico busied himself during the break trying to do all the adjustments and making sure that he's got all bases covered.

Because he feels that the last two games that his Barangay Ginebra crew played still weren't "perfect games."

The Gin Kings break their 2-2 tie with sister team San Miguel in what could go down as the key fifth game tonight, and Uichico literally did not sit on his laurels during the five-day break in anticipation for what San Miguel might throw at him next.

"No, it's not odd at all," Uichico told the INQUIRER over the phone, when asked why he was doing the adjusting when it was clear that he had a huge edge on a lot of things for the rest of the best-of-seven series.

"We still don't know what San Miguel might do (for Game 5)," Uichico added. "They're just minor adjustments that I can't tell you. We still have to be prepared because they (last two games) weren't perfect games by any means."

That could have been the understatement of the year, especially after you have bombarded a team like San Miguel to Kingdom Come in what is seen as the title series of the decade.

Game 5 is set at 7 p.m. at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, with the odds stacked heavily in favor of the Kings, who won Game 3 by 30 points and the next by 35.

Another thing going for Uichico is that Eric Menk is getting healthier, a cause of concern for San Miguel counterpart Chot Reyes.

"They (Beermen) are going to have a harder time preparing for us if Eric is healthy," Rudy Hatfield told the INQUIRER after Game 4. "He just brings so much to this team."

"He's improving day to day," Uichico said of Menk, the former MVP who sat out their semifinal series with Talk 'N Text, who was benched in Game 1, but has come back strong so far and has made an impact.

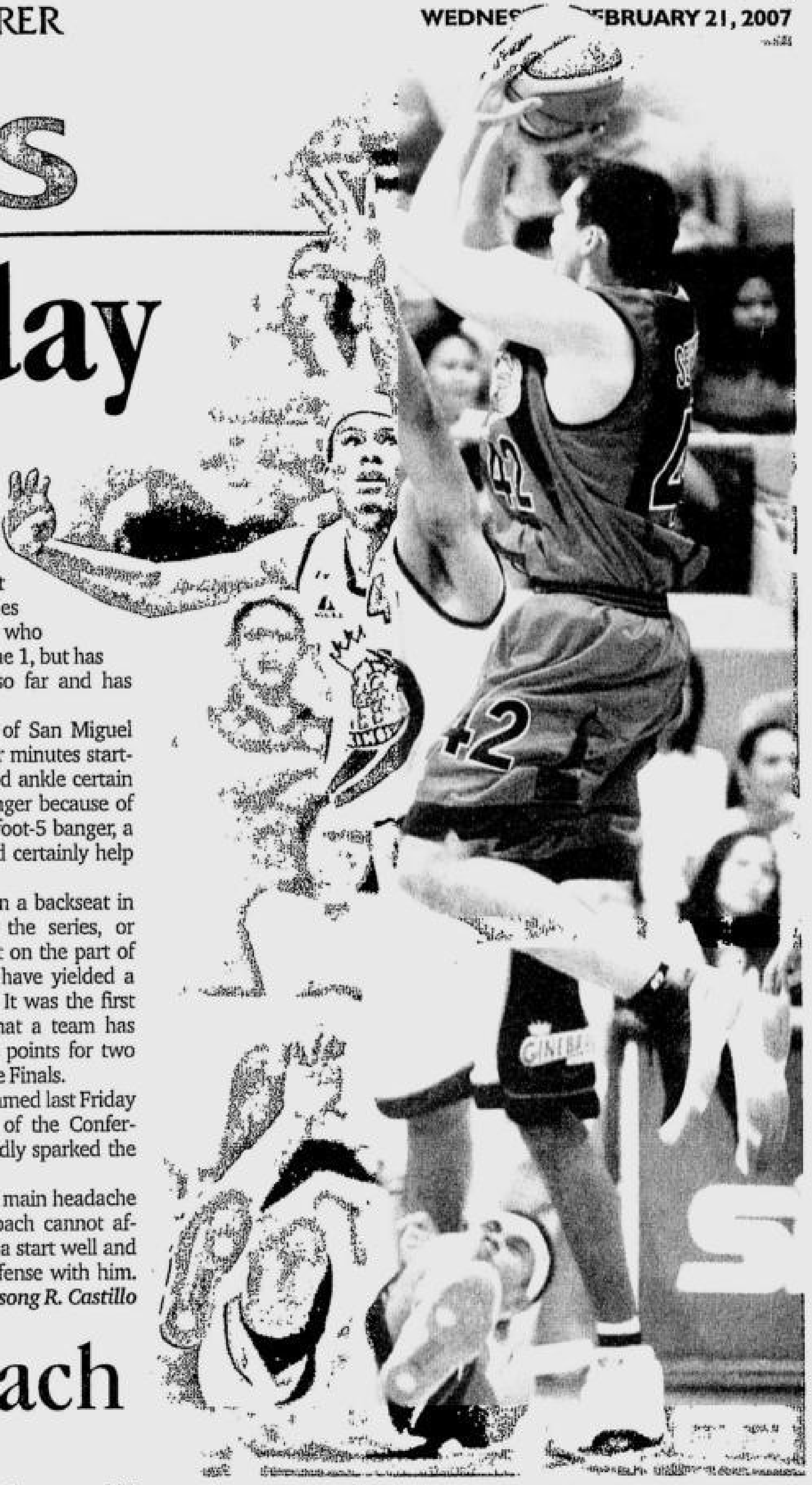
Danny Ildefonso of San Miguel could also see major minutes starting today, his bruised ankle certain to have gotten stronger because of the rest. And the 6-foot-5 banger, a two-time MVP, could certainly help underneath.

Defense has taken a backseat in the last games of the series, or maybe the lack of it on the part of the Beermen, who have yielded a total of 276 points. It was the first time in 17 years that a team has scored at least 130 points for two straight games in the Finals.

Mark Caguioa, named last Friday as the Best Player of the Conference, has undoubtedly sparked the Kings.

He will be Reyes' main headache as the mercurial coach cannot afford to have Caguioa start well and pull the Ginebra offense with him.

Musong R. Castillo



DANNY Seigle (right) will again carry San Miguel.

PDI PHOTO

Chot won't coach Seaba RP 5

From page A25

to participate in.

Trinidad explained that Reyes was asked to present a short list of candidates whom the San Miguel Beer coach in the PBA feels fit for the post. From his pool of able lieutenants at SMB, Reyes could either appoint Aboy Castro or Nash Racela.

Trinidad, who explained the committee's decision to PBA chair Ricky Vargas, also said Reyes could recommend Letran coach Louie Alas and Welcoat assistant coach Caloy Garcia, both of whom worked with him in the past.

Under the BAP-SBP charter, lesser tournaments like the Seaba and the Southeast Asian Games will be handled by the collegiate and commercial sectors of the BAP-SBP board of trustees.

Elite tournaments such as the Fiba-Asia championships and the Asian Games fall under the jurisdiction of the PBA.

The PBA, however, will not be left out of the national team's preparation for the Fiba-Asia championships in July-August to be held in Japan where the top two finishers advance outright to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The pro league could field a PBA-reinforced squad to the Fiba-Asia Champions Cup regional qualifier in Indonesia (April 9) and the Fiba-Asia Champions Cup on May 12-20 in Iran.

Trinidad and Capistrano were inclined to form an all-professional squad while Alvarez and Tan wanted the composite squad. Yang kept his silence but was expected to side with fellow BAP allies Alvarez and Tan had things gotten into a vote.

In the meeting, Reyes was asked if a composite team would be competitive in the Seaba and Reyes, Trinidad said, told the committee that even "a strong collegiate squad can win the Seaba."

Pacquiao snubbing world fight?

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

IT'S STILL BOXING OVER POLITICS, THAT'S the clear message from national idol Manny Pacquiao after he finally began training for his April 14 fight in Texas, USA.

Of course, the Pacman tarried and thereby again allowed himself to be late, meaning he would now be working at a handicap against undefeated Mexican Jorge Solis (32-0).

Actually, Pacquiao should be in Cebu this Saturday for the Moment of Truth card featuring two Pinoy great hopes, Boom Boom Bautista and Z Gorres.

Sorry, Pacquiao will not be there, bared a reliable media person assisting sportsman Tony Aldeguer in the big promotion.

It's a Golden Boy promotion and Pacquiao now fights for Top Rank big boss Bob Arum.

***

Is that the only reason Pacquiao has decided to snub fans and friends in Cebu?

Hold it, please. Before the issue gets out of hand, it must be noted that Pacquiao will be where he is better needed come Saturday.

Yes, there's the promise and possibility of a cockfight extravaganza outside Puerto Princesa, but the Pacman will be in Palawan on a noble mission.

The great fighting cocks will have to be shelved in cages and teepees.

Listen: Pacquiao on Saturday will help launch a sports facility that promises to be an active boxing hero factory.

Young Palaweños who have great potentials in boxing announces a press release from the Office of Palawan Governor Joel Reyes, may just be able to realize their dream of following in the footsteps of the Filipino boxing champion Manny Pacquiao.

***

Gov. Reyes will launch the Adopt-A-Boxer Program on Feb. 24 at the new Job Training and Recreation Center (JTRC) at the annex compound of the provincial government.

"The presence and message of Manny to the program beneficiaries will surely inspire our young boxers," Reyes explained. "Palawan has produced boxers who have shone brightly in national and international amateur competitions. This is a good indication and that is why we are coming up with a program that will allow us to train potential boxers."

The program, the press release explained, will provide a total environment for the trainees under one roof.

"I have instructed the Provincial Sports office to devise a program that will not only provide the athletes the necessary training they need but will also include education, medical and health benefits and allowances," Reyes explained.

Program beneficiaries will get scholarship grants from the Provincial Government under the JTR Scholarship Program. The Provincial Health Office, on the other hand, will take care of the medical and health needs of the trainees.

Those who eventually make it in the international circuits will be trained by professional trainers. Reyes added that his office has already identified the first batch of 15 beneficiaries of the program following the talent identification criteria set by the Philippine Sports Commission.

Coinciding with the launching of the Adopt-A-Boxer Program is the inauguration of the Job Training and Recreation Center at the Gov. Salvador P. Socrates Government Center, Puerto Princesa City which will serve as training facility and dormitory for the trainees. The second floor of the complex will be equipped with training facilities and a boxing ring. A section of the building will be a multipurpose area for other sporting events like badminton and basketball and it could also be used as convention area. The ground floor will serve as offices for provincial and national agencies.

End of press release.

***

Now, to the hotter issue of the day: Pacquiao in politics.

There obviously is no turning back for Pacquiao in his decision to run for Congress.

There's a growing vote by concerned fans for Pacquiao to stay out of the messy political arena, but Pacman has decided to walk the tightrope.

Now, Pacquiao will have to fight two bouts at the same time, swearing blindly that all he honestly wanted was to help his poor provincemates.

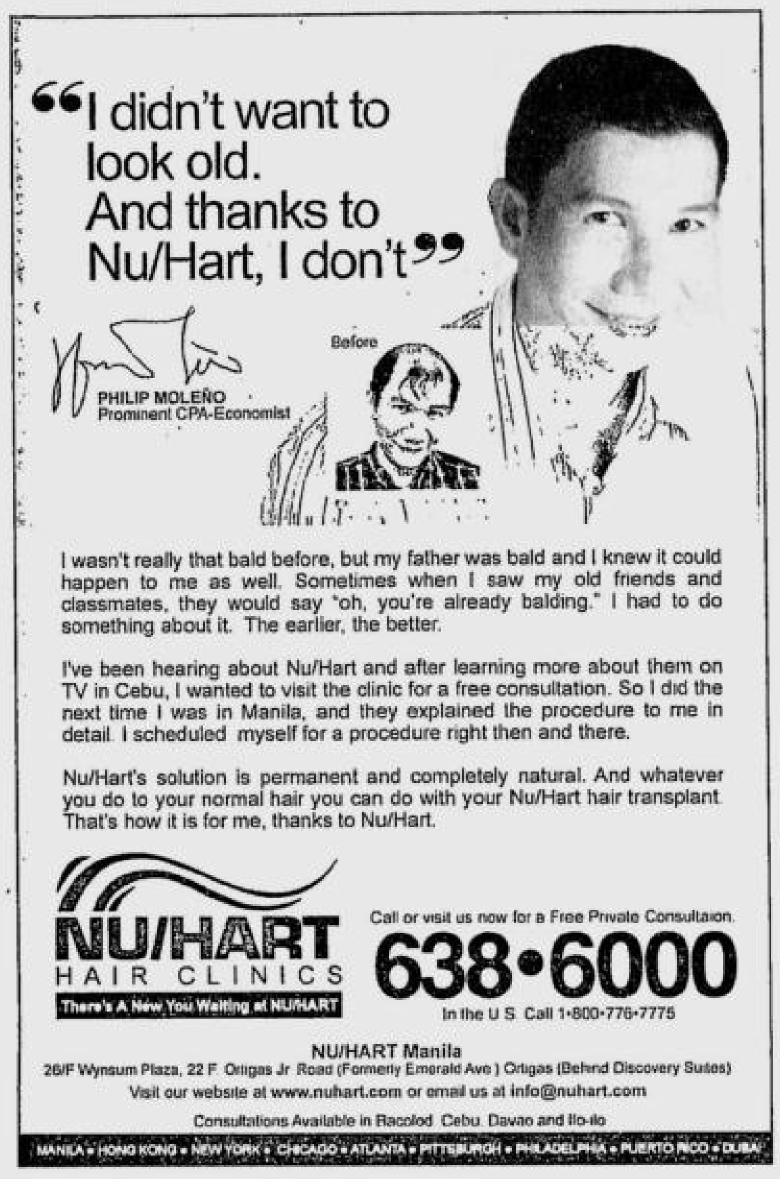
However, these same people are clearly convinced Pacquiao could be of better help (to them) if he doesn't jump on the bandwagon and instead work for reforms in the wretched government system.

Don't look now but there seem enough voters who, despite their adulation and honest concern for Pacquiao, might end up voting for his opponent in the May polls.

Why? Because, as gathered by this reporter, that's the only way to save Pacquiao from messing up both his life and golden career.

These same people sincerely feel they could best express their love for Pacquiao, their idol and patron, by making him lose in his political bid.

Pacquiao is free to believe that or not. Wow Wow Wee!



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PHILIP MOLEÑO
Prominent CPA-Economist

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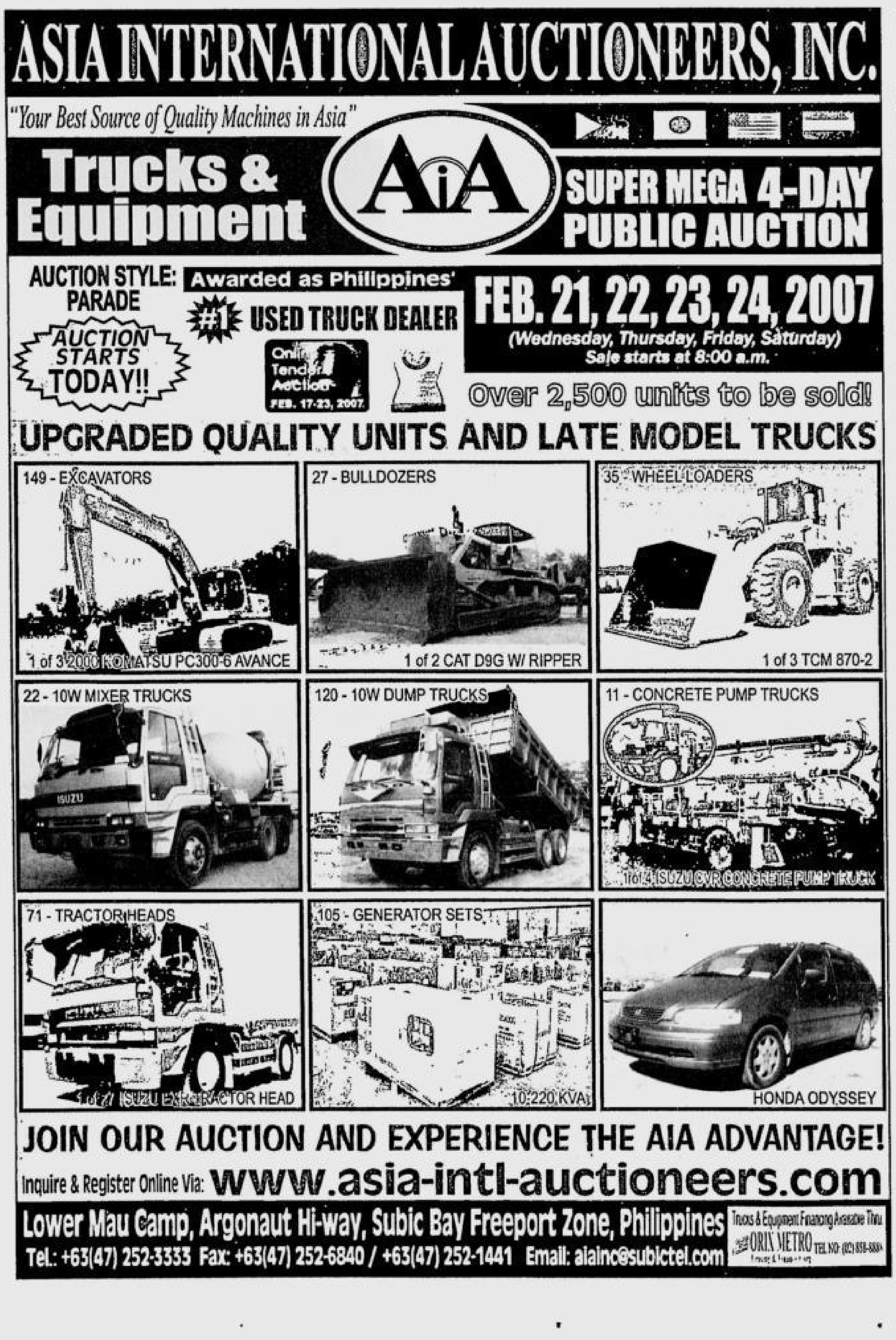

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IN THIS ISSUE

- **Inflation seen to ease** further to 2.8% in 2007 /B4
- **Winning Mirant bidder** eyes expansion /B8

Gov't unveils '7-8-9' growth strategy till 2009

By Doris C. Dumlao

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY UNVEILED AN AMBITIOUS "7-8-9" plan to jack up economic growth for this year until 2009 and catch up with the faster-growing Asian neighbors as President Macapagal-Arroyo urged the country to build up on the gains from 24 consecutive quarters of uninterrupted economic expansion.

The plan calls for a higher gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate than what government economic planners have so far officially adopted as targets: 7 percent for this year, 8 percent for 2008 and 9 percent for 2009, Presidential Chief of Staff Joey Salceda said during a joint Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines-Manila Overseas Press Club luncheon meeting with President Arroyo yesterday.

The new battle cry is a modification of the 7-4-7 plan earlier conceptualized by Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, which called for a 7-percent GDP

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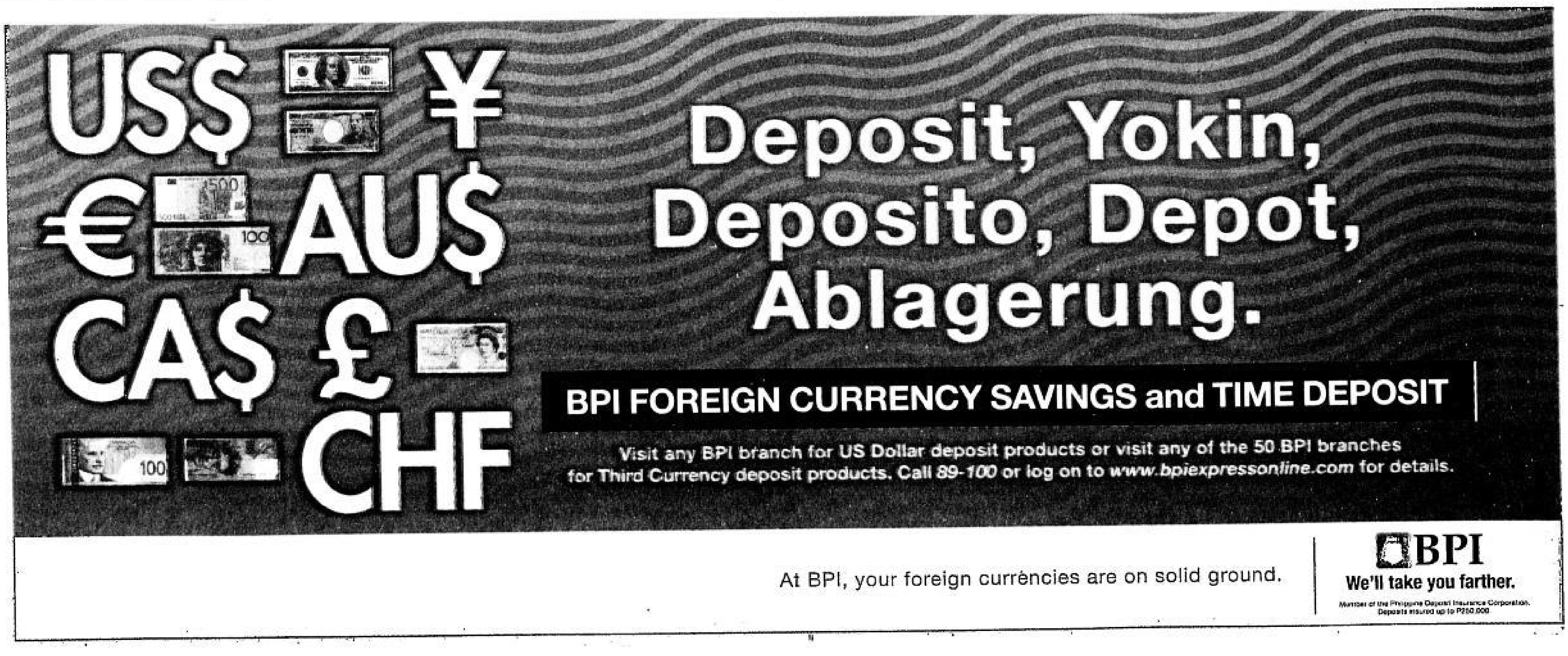

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PLDT budgets ₱20B in new spending; SPi sets ₱5-B capex

By Riza T. Olchondra

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE Co. (PLDT) said yesterday it would spend P20 billion this year to upgrade its services, especially for broadband and its new-generation network (NGN).

PLDT president Napoleon Nazareno told reporters that the capital expenditure (capex) for the country's biggest telco was slightly higher this year and that a major portion would be used for broadband services.

Last year, PLDT had a capex of P18 billion. About P16.9 billion of that amount was used in the first nine months of the 2006 to expand PLDT's NGN, wireless broadband service, 3G cell sites, and call center business.

Nazareno also reaffirmed that PLDT wanted to expand its data businesses, particularly for business process outsourcing.

Meantime, ePLDT Inc.'s business process outsourcing (BPO) unit SPi said yesterday that it would spend P5 billion this year for its acquisition and expansion plans.

SPi president and CEO Ernest Cu said in a statement that the P5 billion in capital outlay was geared "toward accelerating growth and strengthening (the company's) position as the premier provider of global BPO solutions."

SPi wants to extend its business line for its publishing and legal groups this year and get a foothold in the finance and accounting industries.

"The significant capital outlay that has been allocated for expansion will allow us to broaden our capabilities, enter new markets, and further migrate from more commodity-based activities to higher value services," Cu said.

"Because BPO is such a fast-moving industry, we need to evolve in order to stay ahead of the market and to maintain our point of difference as being one of the only true full-service vendors in the BPO market," he added.

SPi presently has presence in the legal, publishing and healthcare sectors.

Last year, the company acquired CyMed Inc., which paved the way for SPi to strengthen its US delivery capability through the addition of 650 medical language specialists.

Investors flock to stocks as T-bill rates slump

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.39-PERCENT higher yesterday as investors snapped up stocks after treasury bill rates fell to record lows, dealers said.

Investors inevitably flocked to the higher-yielding equities market with treasury bill rates declining to all-time lows at Monday's auction, thanks to the government's improving fiscal condition and a better economic outlook.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index closed up 46.28 points at 3,375.31 after moving between 3,347.19 and 3,376.50.

The broader all-share index jumped 32.38 points to 2,143.09.

Gainers trounced losers 107 to 31, while 42 stocks ended unchanged.

Volume amounted to 3.7 billion shares worth P4.1 billion.

"Investors are shifting to the equities market given the low interest rates," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings Inc.

"If this goes on, this will further boost the equities market," he said.

"Sentiment is being boosted with the prospects of interest rates remaining low for a longer period, especially since the government has also gone into bond swaps that would stretch maturities of its loans, this means greater flexibility in managing its debt," said Chelsea Dipasupil of RCBC Securities Inc.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. led winners among blue chips, gaining P10 to P2,595.

Ayala Corp. rose P10 to P635 while its unit, property developer Ayala Land Inc. was up 25 centavos at P17.

Megaworld Corp. gained 15 centavos to P3.35.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. finished a peso higher to P67.50 while Banco de Oro Universal Bank added P1 to P64.

San Miguel Corp.'s A-shares advanced a peso to P66 while its B-shares edged up 50 centavos to P78.50.

AFP

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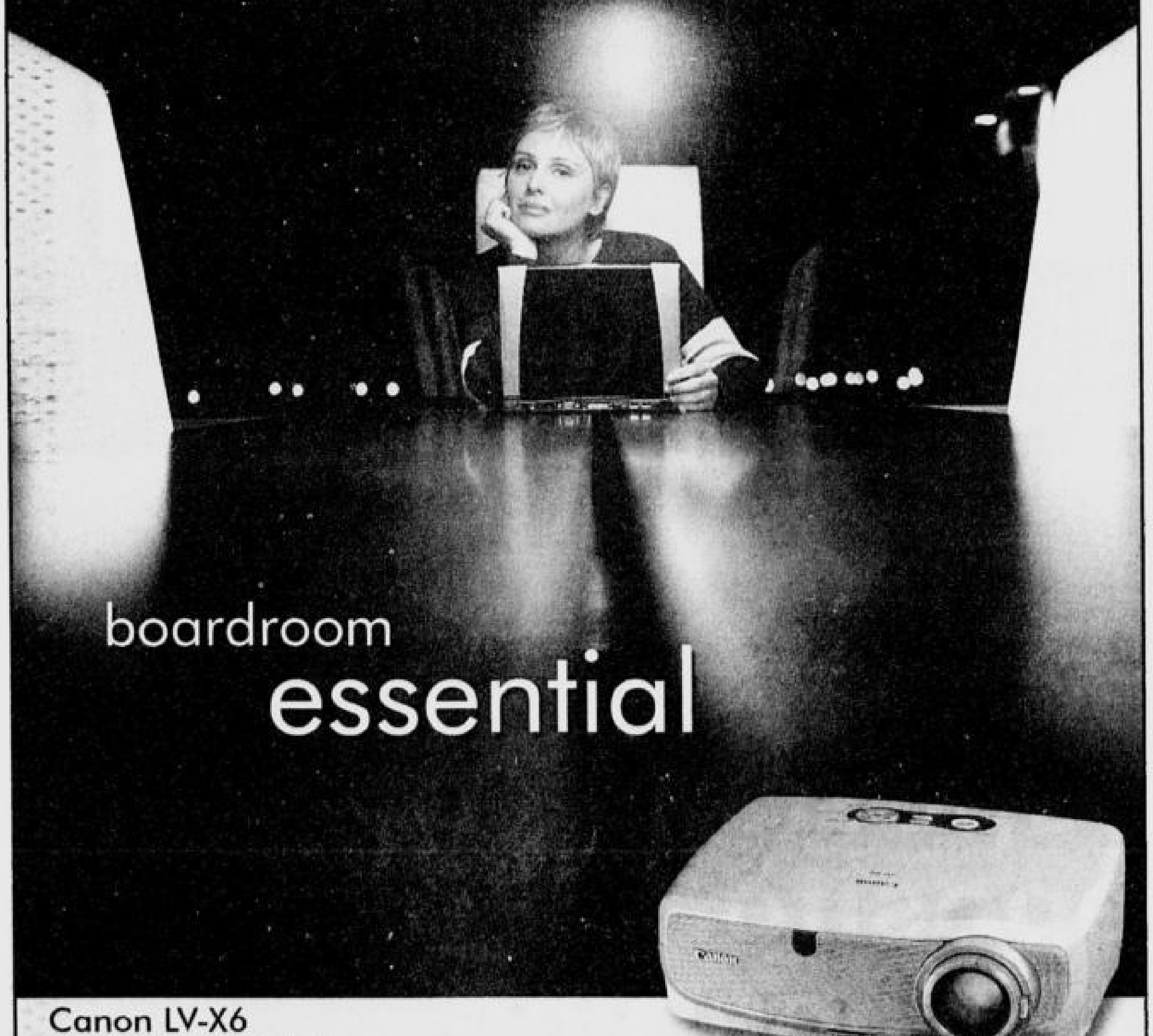

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Delsan Office System Corp.	896-8647	PC TECH	892-1552		

DISCLOSURES

SANTIAGO Cua, Santiago Cua Jr., Exequiel D. Robles, Lawrence Lim Swee Lin, Lim Teong Leong and Datuk Surin Upatkoon have been elected as directors of **JTH Davies Holdings Inc.** Michael Dyogi Uy has likewise been appointed independent director.

***

MAGNUM Holdings, Inc. has disclosed the appointment of Mercado Calderon Jaravata & Co. as external auditor in lieu of A.S. Arellano & Co.

***

JOVENCIO B. Hernandez has been appointed as head of consumer finance sector including the credit card business of the **Philippine National Bank** effective April 1.

***

LAWYER Bienvenido Santiago has been elected corporate secretary of **Leisure and Resorts World Corp.** effective March 1, following the resignation of lawyer Edeline G. Ramos.

***

PHILIP E. Juico has tendered his resignation as president of **MIC Holdings Corp.**

Compiled by Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 20, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	16	17.5	14	14	2,457,800
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	63	64	62.5	64	915,400
Bank of the Phil. Islands	70	70.5	69.5	70	906,800
China Banking Corp.	880	890	880	890	3,320
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	36	38	36	38	5,700
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.53	0.55	0.53	0.55	17,520,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	112	114	112	114	56,750
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	66.5	67.5	66.5	67.5	3,063,700
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	50	57	50	57	11,800
Philippine National Bank	53.5	54	53.5	54.	216,600
Phil. Savings Bank	65	66	65	66	19,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	42.5	43	42	42.5	593,300
Security Bank Corp.	86.5	86.5	85.5	86	126,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	64	66	64	66	31,300
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citisecoline.Com Inc.	6.4	6.4	5.9	6.3	1,702,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	3,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	37	37	36	37	22,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2	2.06	2	2.06	498,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	640	650	640	650	6,660
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2120	2125	2120	2125	950
Ivantage Corp.	1.72	1.76	1.72	1.74	2,440,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
Pnoc Energy Dev. Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.5	10,155,000
First Gen Corp.	57	60.5	57	59.5	419,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	78.5	81	78.5	81	197,900
Manila Electric Co. A	77	78	76	78	360,100
Manila Electric Co. B	78	78.5	76.5	78.5	548,000
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.7	9.8	2,393,000
Petron Corp.	4.7	4.85	4.7	4.8	9,050,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	300,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	14,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.46	1.56	1.46	1.52	5,744,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.95	4	3.9	3.95	311,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	27	27	26.5	27	347,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	50	48	50	1,428,500
RFM Corp.	1.52	1.56	1.52	1.54	404,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.6	2.65	2.6	2.65	184,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.47	430,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65	67	65	66	307,500
San Miguel Corp. B	78	78.5	78	78.5	219,600
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10	10	10	10	2,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.1	2.12	2.06	2.06	450,000
Universal Robina Corp.	20	20.25	20	20	1,798,500
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.78	1.9	1.76	1.84	46,586,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.5	4.65	4.45	4.65	1,903,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.3	8.7	8.3	8.6	9,226,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4	60,000
Republic Cement Corp.	6.6	7	6.6	6.8	1,343,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.4	3,397,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.3	0.58	0.3	0.58	500,000
Metro Alliance Hldgs B	0.4	0.54	0.4	0.54	420,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.69	0.73	0.69	0.73	390,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Picop Resources Inc.	0.35	0.37	0.34	0.36	75,440,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	14,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.68	0.74	0.65	0.74	800,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	322,400,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	66,700,000
Ayala Corp.	630	635	630	635	554,010
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.8	0.81	0.8	0.81	400,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.5	8.7	8.5	8.7	7,924,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	0.0675	8,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.2	641,000
APC Group Inc.	0.41	0.44	0.41	0.43	18,420,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	33,200,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.18	1.2	7,823,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	20,000
Pal Holdings Inc.	3.7	3.75	3.7	3.7	118,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	3	3	2.48	2.48	2,079,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	29,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	4.15	4.4	4.15	4.4	18,065,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.4	7.5	7.3	7.3	532,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5.1	5.4	5.1	5.4	2,106,000
F&J Princ.E Holdings Corp.	1	1	1	1	10,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	30,000
House of Investments Inc.	3	3.1	2.9	3.1	1,267,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.75	14	12.75	13.5	4,021,900
Medco Holdings	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	560,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.69	0.78	0.69	0.78	1,110,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	8.4	8.7	8.3	8.6	3,484,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.65	2.7	2.42	2.46	6,249,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	1,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.25	0.24	0.25	3,480,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	90,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	51,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.73	0.79	0.73	0.79	2,580,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.19	0.165	0.185	75,180,000
SM Investments Corp.	397.5	397.5	390	390	47,960
South China Resources Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	745,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.68	1.7	1.68	1.7	75,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.18	1,440,000
Zeus Holdings Inc.	0.37	0.55	0.37	0.53	2,210,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	17	17	16.75	17	13,536,800
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.45	0.51	0.45	0.5	1,570,000
Belle Corp.	1.42	1.56	1.42	1.54	30,127,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.54	1.56	1.48	1.48	2,472,000
Cityland Development Corp.	2.08	2.1	2	2	311,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.47	5,070,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.8	4	3.8	3.95	722,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.48	2.65	2.48	2.65	1,286,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.34	2,650,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.225	0.23	0.225	0.23	800,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.77	0.82	0.77	0.81	97,290,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	130,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	0.0725	200,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.86	1.9	1.84	1.88	93,638,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	500,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.28	410,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	5,000
Interport Res.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	78,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	60,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	7,540,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.9	1.02	0.9	0.98	25,150,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.025	0.027	0.025	0.027	5,700,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.027	0.029	0.027	0.029	3,300,000
Megaworld Corp.	3.25	3.35	3.2	3.35	61,588,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5	5	4.9	4.9	53,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	230,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.185	0.21	0.185	0.21	1,130,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	186,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	21.25	21.75	21.25	21.75	1,147,900
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.8	0.82	0.78	0.79	55,240,000
SM Development Corp.	4.1	4.35	4.1	4.35	5,471,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.25	12	12.25	7,171,900
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.73	0.77	0.73	0.73	2,400,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.13	0.125	0.125	4,410,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25	26.5	25	26.5	180,900
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	15,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2	2	1.96	1.98	11,008,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1390	1390	1355	1355	129,420
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	7	7.2	7	7.2	3,769,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2590	2605	2580	2595	163,290
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.36	0.37	0.35	0.35	10,440,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	1,100,000
Ionics Inc.	2.4	2.48	2.4	2.48	489,000
IPVG Corp.	5.2	5.7	5.2	5.6	3,611,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	3,200,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.34	154,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.38	2.38	2.34	2.34	808,000
Philweb Corp.	0.041	0.045	0.041	0.045	518,500,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.1	44,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.44	1.46	1.44	1.46	4,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	28	29	27.5	29	726,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.16	1.16	1.16	1.16	66,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.65	3	2.65	2.85	9,563,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	18,000
Philippine Racing Club	3	3	3	3	1,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.87	0.89	0.87	0.89	2,240,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	810	850	810	850	9,620
iPeople Inc.	3.35	3.55	3.35	3.5	1,028,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.55	943,000
Paxys Inc.	28	28.5	28	28.5	298,400
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	50,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.8	6	5.8	6	635,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.9	6.1	5.9	6.1	868,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	149,100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.3	9.3	9	9.1	1,260,000
Benguet Corp. A	11.5	11.5	11.25	11.25	50,100
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.6	101,000
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	1.62	1.78	1.58	1.68	270,404,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.28	11,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	6,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.027	348,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.031	0.031	0.03	0.031	180,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.014	0.014	0.013	0.013	371,400,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.05	4.15	4.05	4.1	10,349,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	18.5	18.5	18.5	18.5	104,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	1,700,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.24	1.24	1.14	1.16	11,996,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	2,180,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	17,400,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	38,300,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	429,400,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10	9.9	10	134,000

CURRENCIES

February 20, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.760167	1.000000	48.0620
Japan	Yen	0.006359	0.008365	0.4020
United Kingdom	Pound	1.483542	1.951600	93.7978
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097299	0.127997	6.1518
Switzerland	Franc	0.616619	0.811162	38.9861
Canada	Dollar	0.652952	0.858959	41.2833
Singapore	Dollar	0.496225	0.652784	31.3741
Australia	Dollar	0.597569	0.786102	37.7816
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.016306	2.652450	127.4821
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202700	0.266652	12.8158
Brunei	Dollar	0.494610	0.650660	31.2720
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0053
Thailand	Baht	0.022692	0.029851	1.4347
UAE	Dirham	0.207012	0.272324	13.0884
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.315500	63.2256
Korea	Won	0.000812	0.001068	0.0513
China	Yuan**	0.098017	0.128941	6.1972
Argentina	Peso	0.245018	0.322321	15.4914
Brazil	Real	0.363525	0.478217	22.9841
Denmark	Kroner	0.134163	0.176491	8.4825
India	Rupee	0.017288	0.022743	1.0931
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217688	0.286369	13.7635
Mexico	New Peso	0.069304	0.091169	4.3818
New Zealand	Dollar	0.532965	0.701115	33.6970
South Africa	Rand	0.106952	0.140696	6.7621
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023046	0.030317	1.4571

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Feb. 19, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.

** Asian time closing rate as of Feb. 15, 2007

DA seeks tariff-free import of corn

Officials hope to ease impact of rise in cost of feeds

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE DEPARTMENT of Agriculture is expected to endorse to Malacañang the proposal for tariff-free importation of some 400,000 metric tons (MT) of yellow corn this year, Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap said.

The proposal is meant to ease the impact of the expected increase in the retail price of feeds.

Yap said that public consultations with corn farmers and stakeholders had already been conducted regarding the proposal to import corn, as requested by feeds and chicken producers.

During the consultations, it was agreed that the importation would be carried out during the lean corn production months of June to July, Yap added.

If the corn imports were to exceed the allowed minimum access volume, a 50-percent tariff is usually slapped.

But since the yellow corn would be shipped in free of trade duties, Yap expected the government to incur some losses.

"I am now coordinating with the finance department regarding the possible revenue losses to the national government," Yap said.

With the zero-percent duty, the government estimate losses to reach P1.6 billion, based on international prices of P12 to P13 per kilo.

Citing the figure, Yap said that "this will not post a threat to the government's fiscal reform program."

The government allows the importation of 232,000 MT of yellow corn under the country's minimum access volume, slapping a 35-percent duty on the grain.

According to the proposal, that has been approved by corn farmers, feed and poultry stakeholders, the 400,000 MT of corn imports will only be allowed after harvests.

Philippine Association of Feed Millers Inc. said in another statement that yellow corn imports at zero-percent duty may ease the possible increase in the local price of feeds.

The price increase will directly affect the retail prices of pork and chicken in the domestic market.

The group said that imported and locally produced corn would bear the same prices which, at present, range from P12 to P12.50 a kilo.

National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. president Albert Lim also expressed his concern on behalf of backyard raisers.

"We need the government to intervene," Lim said. "(If the government does not,) most backyard raisers will have to close down due to the very high cost of production."

The P103.25-billion feed milling industry produces 8.6 million MT of feeds, or about 172 million bags of 50 kg each. Corn comprises half of total feed mill production. The rest are corn-substitutes, such as feed wheat and soybean meal.

The local feed milling sector expects less grain to be imported next year due to the continuing rise of prices of corn worldwide.

Also, most of the corn producers in the US and Brazil are now focusing on ethanol, with many farms expanding the acreage on corn and less on feed wheat and soybean meal, said an industry official.

Peter Mishak, a leading grains trader and director for international trade and business development of AGP in the Chicago Board of Trade, confirmed the trend.

Mishak said the shift of focus was pushing corn prices further up.

"This year has seen the highest corn price in 10 years from less than a dollar to a bushel to almost $4 a bushel," Mishak said. "This is so because ethanol producers are willing to pay a premium for corn. And more farmers are willing to sell their produce for biofuel production than for feeds."

Software firms make a dent in Cagayan ecozone

A CAGAYAN-BASED GAMING COMPANY YESterday welcomed the major contribution that four casino software firms are making in the development of the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority (CEZA) as an interactive gaming zone.

The First Cagayan Interactive Gaming, a gaming firm based in the economic zone, said in a statement that the CEZA has limited for the next two years the choices that are available to future licensees. The statement said the number of licensees of interactive gaming would be limited to 50.

Albee Benitez, First Cagayan chair and president, said in the statement that the software providers have brought experience and a good customer base in his company's early stages of development.

"It would have been far more difficult for us to have built the firm into what it is today (without the software companies)," Benitez said. "We have decided to reward the software companies that have invested capital, time, technological know-how that provided jobs to many Filipinos."

He said at least 3,000 people are now gainfully employed in interactive gaming businesses in the country. Two of these firms—Playtech and Macom—were fundamental to the success of First Cagayan, said Benitez.

According to the statement, two newer groups, RTG and Itafa, have also contributed greatly to the success of the Cagayan-based gaming zone.

The providers have "excellent teams on the ground, and have internationally accredited software and would continue to roll out new games to ensure licensees of the best products," Benitez said.

"We will review in two years whether the choice of software provider should be extended," he added.

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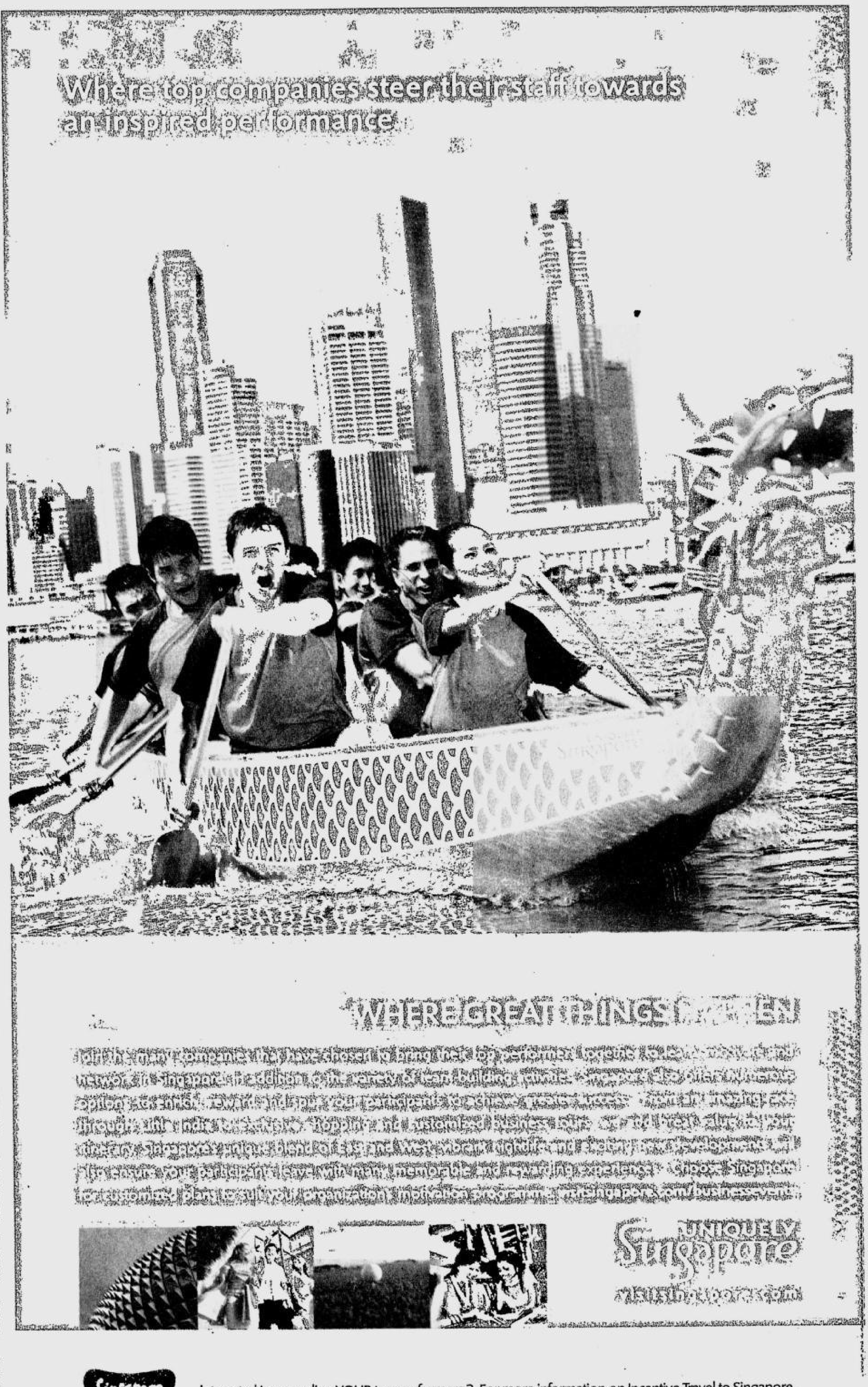
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Inflation seen to ease further to 2.8% in 2007

Economic adviser's forecast more bullish than target set by gov't

By Michelle V. Remo

INFLATION WILL LIKELY EASE further to an average of 2.8 percent, supported by the expected drop in global oil prices, this year.

According to Joey Salceda, newly appointed presidential chief of staff and an economic adviser to President Macapagal-Arroyo, most of the inflationary pressures that attended the economy in 2006 will not be seen this year.

In making his forecast, Salceda is more bullish than the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), the interagency body tasked with setting the government's economic policies and goals.

The DBCC's average inflation target this year ranges from 3.3 to 3.8 percent.

"The DBCC's target is on the conservative side," Salceda told reporters on the sidelines of the government's yearend economic briefing held yesterday in Makati. "A 2.8-percent inflation is feasible, given that we came from a high base last year."

Salceda claimed that inflation growth would decelerate to as low as 2.1 percent in July and would average at 2.8 percent for the full year with the softening of oil prices.

He said that Dubai crude, the benchmark used in setting domestic oil prices, would average at $52 a barrel this year compared with $65 a barrel last year.

The country imports over 90 percent of its oil requirements, making its domestic prices vulnerable to global movement of oil prices.

Salceda said the increase in the value-added tax from 10 to 12 percent last year was the key pressure that pushed consumer prices up.

The VAT hike was embodied in the Value-Added Tax Reform Law, considered the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda.

"But there won't be any new taxes, nor tax hikes, this year," Salceda said, explaining that this would keep prices from accelerating this year.

In January, consumer prices rose 3.9 percent from a year ago, marking the slowest inflation rate since November 2003. This was marked by the decelerated increase in the prices of goods in almost all commodity groups except clothing.

Aside from easing global oil prices, the strengthening of the peso was also credited for the slowdown in inflation. A stronger peso helps makes imported goods cheaper, therefore tempering the increase in consumer prices.

Last January, the peso closed at 48.9 against the US dollar, compared with the 52.17 recorded in the same month a year ago.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. earlier said the January inflation confirmed the central bank's expectation that increase in consumer prices would further slow down, allowing monetary authorities to maintain its key policy rate of 7.5 percent.

The BSP uses its key policy rate as a tool to control inflation. An increase in its borrowing rate encourages banks to deposit more of their funds in the central bank, therefore reducing money in circulation. In turn, this results in tempered growth in demand for commodities, slowing down inflation.

Ocampo: 'Opportunity now staring us in the face'

By Doris C. Dumlao

A DECADE AFTER THE ASIAN crisis, the Philippines had emerged as the least harmed among the economies, yet it failed to take advantage of its edge.

Now, it lags behind its fast-growing neighbors, according to former Finance Secretary Roberto de Ocampo.

During Monday's launch of the RFO Center for Public Finance and Regional Economic Cooperation of the Asian Development Bank, De Ocampo said that the country must also reconsider whether an economy mainly driven by overseas remittances could sustain economic development.

De Ocampo, who was finance chief when the Asian currency turmoil erupted in 1997 and also chaired the Apec Finance Ministers Forum that had laid out measures to mitigate the impact of the turmoil 10 years ago, said the country must now take steps "because opportunity is already staring us in the face."

"While we emerged out of the crisis better than our peers, we have not taken advantage of this edge," he said. "The performance of the economy ... pales in comparison with its peers, who suffered much more than we did at the height of the crisis."

De Ocampo noted that after the Asian crisis, the government's fiscal position worsened, leading to a much-feared crisis two years ago. That, in turn, prompted the increase in the value added taxation.

He also lamented that the Philippines remained at the near-bottom on competitiveness rankings, even below than Indonesia.

De Ocampo noted that the country was receiving "crumbs" from huge capital flows to Asia, projected to reach more than $50 billion by the end of 2007.

De Ocampo said his statements should not be viewed as grounds for pessimism but, instead, taken as a challenge to lead the country to "its rightful place in the sun."

"A lot still has to be done in the local scene. While we start the year with encouraging signs such as a 5.4 percent growth rate and low inflation, it remains to be seen whether the Philippines can in fact take advantage of its position and partake in the Asian century to the extent of its potential," he said.

PSALM gets creditor consent for Napocor asset transfer

By Abigail L. Ho

THE WORLD BANK HAS APPROVED the issuance of a universal consent for the transfer of the National Power Corp.'s debts and assets to the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

In a statement issued yesterday, PSALM said it received on Jan. 29 clearance from the Inter-agency Committee for the Review of Foreign Loan documents (IAC-RFLD) for three agreements that amended Napocor's original loan agreements with the World Bank-International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (WB-IBRD).

These amended agreements should be formalized next month.

"Debt and asset transfer has always been on top of PSALM's list of major action items," PSALM president Nieves Osorio said. "This development will bring government's privatization efforts further forward, as universal consent will impact on the attractiveness of the assets and facilitate the transfer of power assets successfully bid out to the new private owners."

According to PSALM, creditor consent is a standard requirement of banks and other financial institutions before its borrowers can transfer ownership of assets that were acquired using loans that they extended.

The amended loan agreements provide the terms and conditions for WB-IBRD's consent to the transfer of Napocor's debts and assets to PSALM.

The universal consent that the World Bank would issue to PSALM was particularly important, PSALM said, as this meant it no longer had to wait a long time before being able to transfer a Napocor generation asset to the winning bidder.

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Waste management: $40-B Asian enterprise still has room to grow

By Ronnel W. Domingo

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT WILL actually spur investments and create jobs, and it is up to the governments in Asia to create effective policies that will lead to sustainable use of resources, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Among developing countries in the Asia-Pacific, including the Philippines, businesses related to waste management, now estimated to be worth $40 billion, may further grow by at least 10 percent a year, the ADB said.

This was revealed last week during a two-day forum called 3R Workshop on Effective Management and Resource Use Efficiency in East and Southeast Asia, which the ADB hosted in its headquarters in Mandaluyong City.

3R refers to "reduce, reuse and recycle" in waste management.

Representatives from governments, the private sector, international organizations and nongovernment organizations took part in the forum, which sought to review key issues relating to effective waste management, as well as identify opportunities for investments.

According to Bindu Lohani, director general of ADB's regional and sustainable development department, decision makers have been reluctant to put in place measures to promote efficient use of resources because they believe it will hurt businesses or cause job loss.

Lohani said that, on the contrary, enormous business opportunities will be created once more effective policies are in place.

"More systematic attention to waste management and resource use efficiency translates into new jobs and new business opportunities," he added.

He cited as an example the construction of environmental infrastructure such as wastewater treatment or solid waste management systems.

Lohani said such business opportunities globally are estimated to be worth about $600 billion a year. This figure is expected to grow to about $800 billion over the next decade.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the existing market represents some $40 billion, which could grow by as much as 12 percent—the fastest rate in the world.

In the forum, experts warned that Asia's cities alone were generating 760,000 ton of solid waste daily, and this is expected to increase to 1.8 million tons a day by 2025.

Data from the World Health Organization show that the Philippines was producing 10 million tons of waste yearly as of 2000. Of the total volume, 42 percent are recyclable materials.

Every Filipino was churning out an average of 0.5 to 0.7 kilograms of waste daily. A resident of Metro Manila yields an average of 0.66 kg a day.

Gov't unveils '7-8-9' growth ...

From page B1

growth for seven consecutive years.

"Now that we know the way, it is time to run faster. After six years of getting it right, now it is three years of getting it done," Salceda said.

"Technically or numerically, it seeks to break out of the narrow band of growth that has characterized the Philippines' GDP growth pattern where gains are easily wiped out by a crisis at the end of every cycle," he explained.

GDP, deemed as the single most important indicator of economic growth, refers to the total amount of goods and services produced by the domestic economy in a given period.

The President urged economic journalists to pose a challenge to the business community, which she called the "movers and shakers" in society, "to take a bigger stake in economic development."

"The government cannot do this alone," the President said, calling for "shared responsibility between the private and public sectors."

She vowed that the national government, for its part, would spend about P3 trillion over the next three years to boost the country's huge infrastructure requirements.

The President also noted that the power sector would be the next area of focus for economic reforms.

Salceda said the 7-percent GDP growth for this year, which would be higher than the 6.1-6.7 percent official growth target set by the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee, was committed by the President to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

"It is numerically feasible. The difference between the low-end 6.1 percent of DBCC and 7 percent of Plan 7-8-9 is only an additional P55 billion in nominal gross value-added," Salceda said.

Based on the 2007 national budget, he noted that infrastructure spending alone would grow by P64 billion.

"It goes beyond the orthodox MTPDP (Medium Term Philippine Development Plan)-centric planning where the government just sets out targets and prays that players in the economy will respond positively and the global environment remains conducive," Salceda said.

He said the plan would require "out-of-box" strategies, by "possibly rebalancing resource allocation, recalibrating sequencing of activities, some simple tightening of policy cohesion and some public policy innovation."

He said the 7-percent growth envisioned for this year would depend on public sector investments, which were compressed in the last few years due to Congress' failure to pass the national budget, while the 8-percent GDP growth for 2008 would rely on the influx of private foreign investments.

The 9-percent growth envisioned for 2009 would depend on higher domestic investment which, in turn, would be stimulated by government and private investments in 2007 and 2008.

He noted that the 8-percent growth for 2008 was the President's internal mantra while the 9-percent growth envisioned for 2009 would be an arithmetic progression of preceding growth forecasts.

"In the next three years, the government will concentrate on infrastructure and social spending as its principal tool but skillful targeting and other enabling policies (will also be done) to prod business activity in certain sectors to secure these growth targets," Salceda said.

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on Monday, February 19, 2007 at the age of 69.

His remains will be brought from Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue to the Plenary Hall of the House of Representatives, Batasan Hills, Quezon City, for a Requiem Mass and Necrological Services at 10 a.m. today, February 21, 2007.

After the Requiem Mass and Necrological Services at the House of Representatives, his body will be brought to Valenzuela Convention Center where he will lie in state.

Interment will be announced later.

We request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Death Notices

BASILISA SISON ESCANO

passed away on February 16, 2007
at the age of 98.

Interment will be on Thursday, February 22, 2007 after the 8:00 am Mass at Epiphany Co-Cathedral, Lingayen, Pangasinan.

* * *

LEONARDO TRINIDAD DE GUZMAN

passed away on February 18, 2007
at the age of 78.

His remains lie in state at the Imperial chapel of La Funeraria Paz, Quezon City.

Interment will be on February 24, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

* * *

VICTORIA T. BALINGIT

passed away on February 17, 2007
at the age of 93.

Her remains lie in state at the Jose Rizal Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on February 27, 2007 at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat Parañaque City.

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Our Beloved Mommy

DAHLIA RIVERA CLARAVÁLL

of Cagayan de Oro City and Quezon City

Peacefully returned to the Lord on February 19, 2007 at the age of 86 to join her husband, ***Lorenzo P. Claraváll.***

We, the children **EMMANUEL** and **Edith, LUIS** and **Mary, MARILINDA** and **Paul Yee** (†), **ROBERTO** and **Rea, NILA** and **Ricardo Gonzalez, ADRIAN** and **Baby, GERARDO** and **Monette, MARIBEL** and **Mario Difiore, CAROLYN** and **Peter Gismondi, ERIC John** and **Gidget;** grandchildren **Bambi** and **Marge**, **Kat-Kat**, **Juan Carlos, Stephanie, Valerie** and **Lorraine, CJ**, **Dahlia**, **Amon**, **Ann** and **Lala, Paolo**, **Miguel** and **Angela, Sofia**, **RJ**, **Herman**, and **Ro, Franccina**, **Sasha** and **Belle, Migs** and **Alliyah, Tara**, **Giro**, **Lollie** and **Nicola, Lawrence**, **Jay** and **Alexander, Chris, Joey** and **Dette;** great-grandchild **Victoria** respectfully request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at St. Alphonsus De Liguori Chapel,
Magallanes Village, Makati City.

Interment will be on February 24, 2007 at the Garden of Reflection I, Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City after the 8:00 a.m. Requiem Mass.

> **"Even when I walk through a dark valley, I feel no harm.**
> **For you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage..."**
> Psalm 23:4

"And what is to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides,
that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?
Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.
And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.
And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly Dance. . ."

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

JAIME MEDINA CLAPAROLS, JR.

September 13, 1955 – February 17, 2007

His loving wife **Geraldine Padua**;

children : **Jose Jaime**, **John Paul** and **Antonio Miguel**;

brothers : **Ricardo** and **Julie**;
Antonio and **Vicky**;
  Aldo, **Andres** and **Olivia**
Javier;
Philippe;
  Joey and **Jacques**

relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His cremated remains lie in state at Capilla dela Virgen at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City, and daily masses will be at 7:00 p.m.

Burial Mass will be today, February 21, 2007, 10:00 a.m. at Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

"And what is to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides,
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Winning Mirant bidder eyes expansion

New capacity of 400MW may be installed in coal-fired plant in Pagbilao, Quezon

By Abigail L. Ho

THE MARUBENI CORP.-TOKYO Electric Power Co. consortium, which won the bidding for Mirant Corp.'s Philippine assets, has committed to expand by 400 megawatts the 735-MW Pagbilao coal-fired power plant in Quezon.

In an interview with reporters yesterday, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said officials of the Japanese consortium members had made that commitment to President Macapagal-Arroyo in their recent visit to Malacañang.

No firm timetable had been given for the Pagbilao expansion, as the consortium wanted to focus first on closing its transaction with Atlanta-based Mirant Corp.

The Japanese group, Lotilla said, was awaiting completion of repairs on two units of the 1,200-MW Sual coal-fired power plant in Pangasinan. The first unit should be ready by April and the second unit, in May.

He said the closing of the transaction should be done shortly after the completion of the repairs, probably in June.

"Once they have closed the transaction, that's when they are going to focus on other projects," he said.

Using the investment rule-of-thumb of $1 million for every 1 MW of power plant capacity, he said the required investment for the Pagbilao expansion should be about $400 million.

The needed investment could likely be less than this amount, however, as the plant would only be expanded and would not be built from scratch.

Mirant Global Philippines Corp., the erstwhile partnership between Mirant Philippines Corp. and Metrobank subsidiary Global Business Holdings Inc., committed in 2004 to install 350 MW in new capacity in the Pagbilao plant for an estimated investment of $300 million.

The expansion was not implemented, however, until Mirant sold off its Visayas assets and eventually its entire interest in the Philippine market.

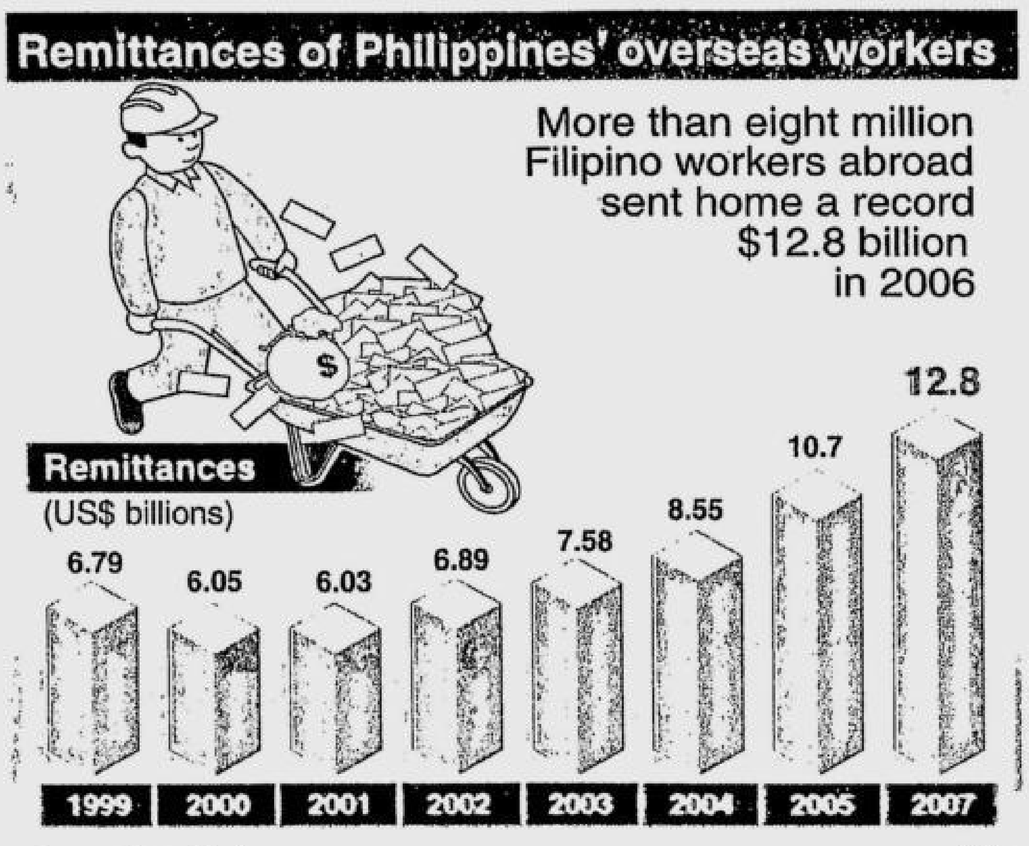
Lotilla said that apart from the Pagbilao expansion, President Arroyo had also urged the Marubeni-Tepco consortium to look at other investment opportunities in the country.

The Marubeni-Tepco consortium's bid for the Mirant assets bested the offer submitted by the only other bidder—the joint venture between Malaysia's Tanjong Plc and OneEnergy, a partnership between Hong Kong's CLP Holdings and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp.

Atlanta-based Mirant last year decided to divest its offshore assets and focus on its operations in the United States.

Apart from owning and operating the Pagbilao and Sual plants, it also holds a 20-percent stake in the Ilijan gas-fired power facility in Batangas.

Its net ownership interest in those three generating facilities came up to 2,203 MW.



Source: Central Bank

150207 AFP

RCBC profit up 23%

RIZAL COMMERCIAL BANKING Corp. posted a 23-percent profit growth in 2006 to P2 billion from year-ago's P1.63 billion.

In a statement, RCBC said the growth could be attributed to its intensified efforts to generate more income from its core lending business and a larger securities portfolio.

The bank also registered a 23-percent increase in asset base to P227.3 billion last year from the previous year's P185 billion. This was buoyed by the 44 percent growth in financial market assets to P61.0 billion.

Total deposits rose to P157.4 billion from P133.2 billion in the previous year.

The new RCBC chief executive officer CEO, Lorenzo V. Tan, credited the management team led by former CEO Rizalino S. Navarro, vice chair Cesar E. A. Virata and president Francisco S. Magsajo for the bank's growth.

RCBC's aggressive capital buildup toward the last quarter of 2006, with its issuance of $100 million in hybrid tier 1 securities and P1 billion worth of perpetual but noncumulative preferred shares, boosted the bank's capital accounts to P24.5 billion from P13.2 billion in 2005.

The capital-raising activities have increased RCBC's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) to over 20 percent from 14 percent in 2005.

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ECONOMIC BRIEFING
The administration economic team, led by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, welcomes President Arroyo to the joint Economic Journalist Association of the Philippines-Manila Overseas Press Club luncheon meeting on Tuesday at the Shari-La Hotel in Makati. Other members of the economic team present during the meeting are Energy Secretary Rafael Lotilla, Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and Trade Secretary Peter Favila. EDWIN BACASMAS

SM Group putting up 2 more BPO facilities

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE rapid growth in the business process outsourcing industry, the SM Group is making available additional spaces for this sector this year in Baguio City and Bacoor, Cavite, SM Prime Holdings president Hans Sy said.

At the sidelines of yesterday's luncheon meeting hosted by the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) and the Economic Journalist Association of the Philippines (Ejap), Sy said SM Investments Corp.—the holding firm for the Sy family's interests in banking, retail and leisure development—was also launching in July OneEcomCenter. This facility is a 100,000-square-meter, 10-storey e-commerce building located near the Mall of Asia.

Other BPO spaces in the pipeline include a four to five-storey building in Baguio which broke ground yesterday, and a 4,000-square-meter mall space in Bacoor which will be converted into a call center space, Sy said.

SM Investment Corp. recently raised $300 million from the issuance of 5-year convertible bonds. The amount will be used to refinance a portion of its maturing obligations and for working capital.

SMIC officials earlier said the group was earmarking P2.5 billion to partially finance projects near the Mall of Asia, including OneE-com Center and the 42,500-square-meter SMX Convention Center (an exhibition and convention center).

SMIC is increasing its capital spending this year to P20 billion from P15 billion last year mainly to support its tourism and mall projects.

SMIC said of the P20 billion programmed spending in 2007, P7 billion would be used for new malls and the expansion of existing malls; P7 billion for its 5,700-ha resort project in Nasugbu, Batangas and other property projects, and P2 billion for the establishment of 10 more department stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets.

Grants from Japan, Europe boost BOC inspection system

By Ronnel W. Domingo

SOME P585.5 MILLION IN GRANTS FROM Japan and Europe had helped the Bureau of Customs to put in place stricter processes of screening import shipments, allowing it to seize a substantial volume of pirated items last year.

Of the total, P500 million, which came from the Japanese government, was spent for further development of the BoC's data warehousing and data mining that helped the agency detect imports with intellectual property rights violation.

Another P85.5 million was obtained from the European Commission, and was earmarked for the upgrade of the BoC's risk management system, and valuation database and training ware.

The upgraded system enabled the agency to detect IPR violations of incoming shipments at an earlier period.

According to Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., director general of the Intellectual Property Office, the BoC contributed 55 percent or some P723 million of the total P1.3 billion worth of goods seized by agencies of the National Committee on Intellectual Property Rights.

Other NCIPR member agencies include the Optical Media Board, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine National Police, Department of Justice, Department of Interior and Local Government, National Book Development Board and the National Telecommunications Commission.

Cristobal said the bureau's comprehensive plan—including policy reforms, technology application, and an overall commitment to the committee's collective goals—in enforcing IPR resulted in marked improvement in its operations last year.

He said the BoC's efforts, as well as those of the other agencies, helped in the country's removal from the United States watchlist of IPR violators.

CebuPac call center expands

CEBU PACIFIC HAS UPGRADED THE PHYSICal and technical capabilities of its call centers in Manila and Cebu to keep up with the growth in passenger volume.

"We've increased the capacity of our call centers by 67 percent last year and linked our Manila and Cebu call centers so that calls are routed to the first available agent regardless of where the calls are coming from and where the agent is located," Marvin Cui, CEB director for reservations, said.

CEB offers a 24-hour call center service for Manila (70-20-888) and Cebu (230-8888) based guests and receives more than 10,000 calls daily. CEB's call center also accepts credit card payments for ticket purchases.

CEB employed an additional 130 agents in 2006 for its Manila and Cebu call centers to better serve its rapidly growing customer base. CEB reported a 57-percent increase in passenger volume in 2006 as against that in 2005.

Now in its 11th year, CEB has the newest fleet in the Philippines, and one of the newest in Asia as it operates 13 brand new Airbus aircraft to its 20 domestic and seven regional destinations. The airline awaits the delivery of one more Airbus aircraft in March 2007 to complete its $670-million refleeting program.

NTC fails to settle Globe, TXTPower row

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICAtions Commission (NTC) failed to settle amicably the dispute between Globe Telecom Inc. and consumer advocacy group TXTPower in a consultation with both parties on Tuesday.

Another consultation was set for Friday in a last-ditch effort to settle the row amicably, failure of which would lead to the start of the legal proceedings.

The Tuesday consultation was the third pre-hearing meeting, which followed those held on Feb. 12 and 14.

NTC spokesperson Lucio Espinoza said the agency would convene formal hearings if the issue would remain unresolved on Friday.

TXTPower's "minimum demand" is the restoration of Globe's original Unlimitext rates of P15 for one day, P25 for two days, and P50 for five days alongside the new P15 daytime and P10 nighttime rates.

Globe did not formally make a counteroffer but it informally proposed a new promo of P100 for six days, TXTPower spokesperson Anthony Ian Cruz said. The new offer is equivalent to P16.666 a day, still higher than the P10 a day that TXTPower wants.

Globe officials would not confirm the offer but said the telco would submit a formal counteroffer on Friday.

"Globe was able to provide P10 a day rate for one whole year, from last year to January this year. We are asking Globe to provide a higher pricing option of P100 for 10 days so that the price would stay at the same level as before," Cruz said.

MOTORING

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Photo by Rudy Esperas

'Diamond in the rough' 4x4 now crosses 35 rivers

Text and photos
by Tessa R. Salazar

A GENUINE 4x4 pickup truck or an attractive-looking vehicle attempting to be a workhorse? Find out for yourself.

BY MY LAST count, that's how many rivers the new Mitsubishi Strada 4x4 pickup has crossed with me as its driver. Last time I checked my personal record books, that's the most a pickup has done by me.

You would have expected another rougher-looking truck to have done the trick. But life, like an off-road track, is full of surprises. The Strada's spanking good looks did fool me. It fooled me into thinking that this pickup, unlike its workhorse competitors, would be a "trophy" pickup—nice to look at, great to show off around the block, but would act like a fish out of water when it came to its supposed natural habitat.

But the Strada is a member of the evolutionary next step for pickups. These pickups would not only carry their owners through thick and thin jungles and waist-deep river (or floodwater), they would also look good enough to be your "ride" for the next club soiree.

Mechanical beast

But the Strada, like any mechanical beast of burden, gets bored easily when not put through its proper paces. So, the people who bred this mutant of a pickup at Mitsubishi Motors, in their desire to show that the new Strada 4x4 should be made to explore the unpaved beyond to keep its primal instincts burning, invited selected motoring journalists on a journey on the unfinished 93.77 kilometer, 4-lane highway (the 50.5-km long Subic-Clark section and the 43.27 Clark-Tarlac section) being constructed by the Bases Conversion Development Authority.

The 9 Stradas that traversed the Clark-Tarlac highway on a sunny Thursday passed through alternately rough, muddy, dusty and paved roads. The pickups soon showed why Mitsubishi had a bestseller in its hands. It drove like a sedan, but it bullied its way around like a true pickup. Now that's a two-thumbs-up deal, quoting a shrilly game show host.

Peer confirmation

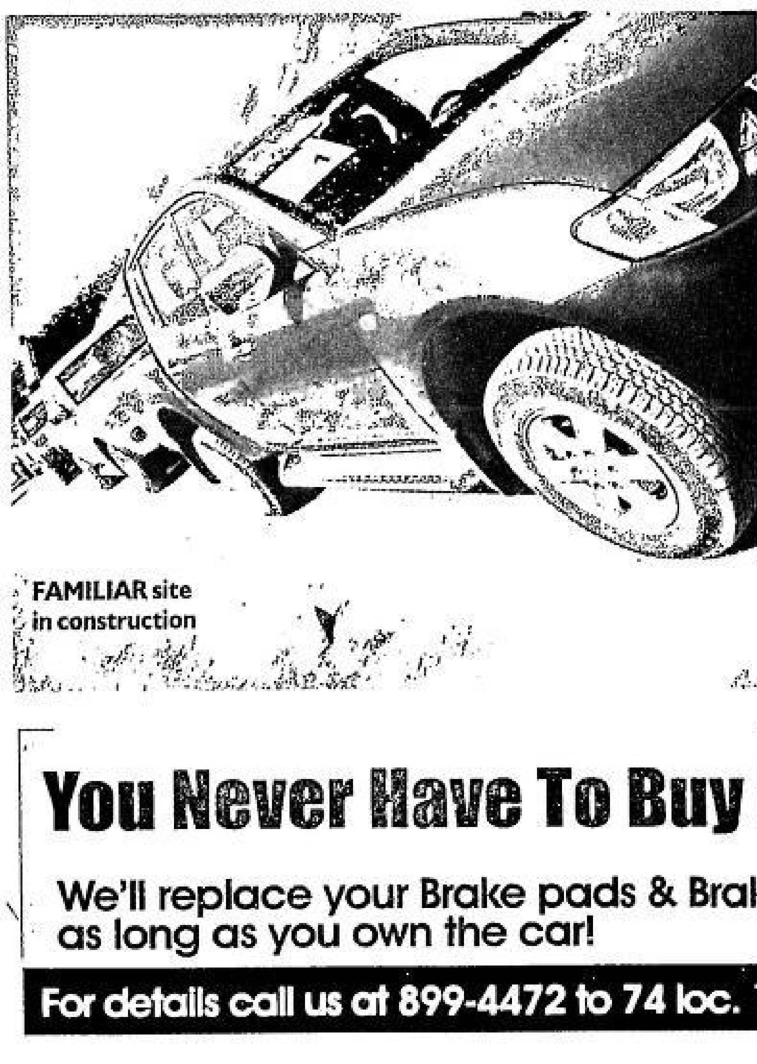
For this writer, the Clark experience was just peer confirmation of what she herself experienced on a more intense level during the Ilocus Sur "Heroes Trek" adventure in January. During this adventure—a 10-km ride from Salcedo to Gregorio del Pilar—the Strada, with its 2.5-liter common rail turbodiesel engine, kept in pace with a supposedly stronger 3.0-liter competitor pickup, as they parted waist-deep rivers 34 times and maneuvered around boulders and negotiated steep inclines while fully loaded with humans, luggages and bikes.

Even more surprisingly, the Strada negotiated all of these without having the LSD (limited slip differential) installed.

Buyers of the new Strada 4x4 would do well to explore the many capabilities of their handsome pickup. After all, what good is a tuxedo made by Nike if it wouldn't make you look good on the tracks, as well? On the other hand, you'd look just as dashing wearing couch potato pajamas while driving around in a Strada. No kidding. Just never leave the Strada, okay?

Verdict: No doubt, the Strada is one handsome pickup. And it really drives like a car with generous legroom to boot. Consider the independent double wishbone with coil springs front for handling and cornering (the rear uses leaf springs for load bearing), and the safety aspects dual front

DIAMOND/B2-2



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Excellent road trip companion

Text and photos by Charles E. Buban

IT HAS BEEN YEARS SINCE this writer last set foot in Banaue, Ifugao.

So when an opportunity came up a couple of weeks ago, this writer herded a couple of friends and headed to this town known for its magnificent rice terraces and beautiful mountain scenery.

Motor Image Philippines, the exclusive distributor of the Subaru brand in the country, was kind enough to lend us its Legacy Wagon, a very versatile 2.0-liter, mid-size car with lots of cargo room.

We could have chosen an SUV or a minivan but we took into consideration our fuel budget considering that Banaue is 333 km away and will pass by several traffic-congested cities and towns.

Very few vehicles

Besides, very few vehicles could match the Legacy's Horizontally Opposed or Boxer engine as well as the Symmetrical All-Wheel-Drive System, which are standard on all Subaru models.

We reasoned that we will need these two Subaru features when we negotiate the mountainous and zigzag road of Sta. Fe in Nueva Vizcaya, and Lagawe in Ifugao.

Indeed, the P1.6 million Legacy Wagon we drove delivered as we have anticipated—the Legacy's grip was incredible, whether the roads were dry and twisty or filled with chicanes made up of fallen rocks or *palays* left to dry on the highway.

Well tuned

Its suspension is well-tuned for what this writer thinks is an ideal balance between a comfortable ride and excellent handling.

Any lingering doubts this writer had about the worth of all-wheel-drive evaporated on this trip.

The car's ability to corner is something to behold. For the most part of the drive, the Legacy Wagon rose to the occasion when we challenged its ability to hold the road.

Aside from being twisty in Sta. Fe and in Lagawe, the road that we took is littered with slow-moving tricycles, 18-wheelers and hand tractors (locally known as "kuliglig") that made your drive longer and miserable if you don't know how to time your overtake.

Suffices

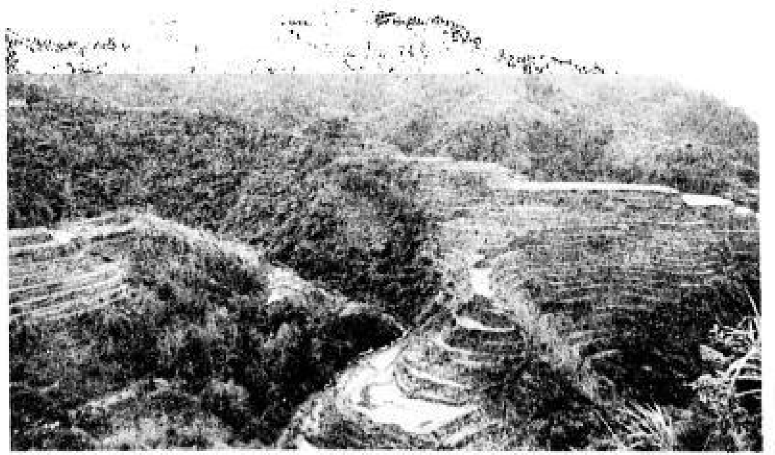
Although this writer would hope for a turbo version, the Legacy Wagon's 163 horsepower nonturbo engine suffices in outrunning these vehicles.

Though tired and groggy (the usual eight-hour trip became 11 hours because of the ongoing road work in Gapan City, Nueva Ecija), we were rewarded by the breathtaking sight of the rice terraces that were painstakingly carved by the Ifugaos using primitive tools and bare hands more than 2,000 years ago.

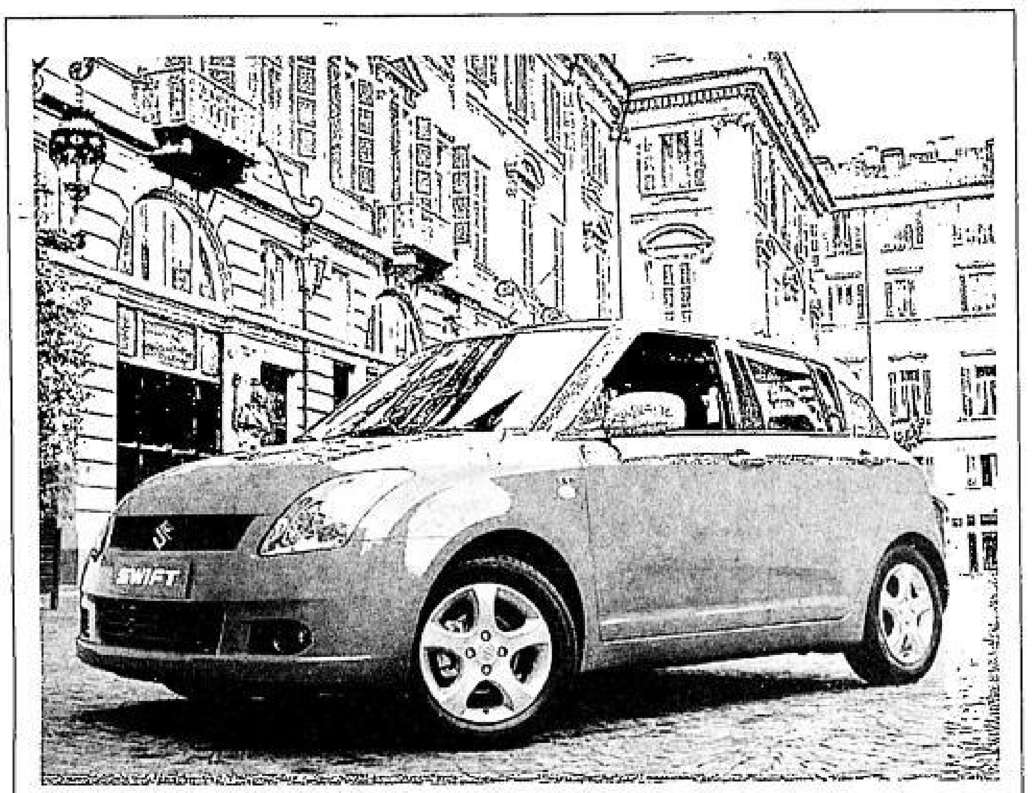
We decided that another trip to Banaue is in order, probably in the summer months, to further explore the other rice terraces in the area.

And would we drive another Legacy Wagon in a similarly long and arduous trip? That's an absolute yes. The vehicle's carrying capacity and fuel economy is hard to beat. Moreover, it's roomy, loaded with safety features, and a delight to drive.

THE SUBARU Legacy Wagon, now resting in one of the shops lining up Banaue's road, rose to the occasion when challenged to show its ability to hold the road.



THE GROUP is rewarded by the breathtaking sight of the rice terraces that were painstakingly carved by the Ifugaos more than 2,000 years ago.



What the Swift says to us

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

"TALK TO ME, TALK TO ME, PLEASE" is something I find myself saying out loud to cars, every time I hop into the cockpit of a test-drive unit. This plea is made, hoping that time spent behind the wheel results in some new insight worthy of the paper this column is printed on. All one needs to do really is listen carefully, the answers coming from the body language and the whispering that cars make during drives. But maybe, this is a tone too serious for a car like the Suzuki Swift.

It can get stale too, constantly seeing the automotive world through the point of view of this author. The question of what cars tell other people is something that I've really been curious about.

Experiences of individuals

So this is how the Suzuki Swift will be tackled this week, through the experiences of individuals whose opinions are a little less solemn but nonetheless are laden with insight.

Comments on the design and choice of model name come by way of twentysomething graphic artist, Ace. The compact size and arresting sheet metal came across to him as very European in nature, despite the Japanese origins of the automobile. He went on talking about the choice of model name comparing it to other subcompacts in the market. The word Swift is able to convey the car's fun nature, albeit a little too young and playful for older buyers. Names like Jazz and Vios convey a steadiness, a certain level of stability, a little more conservative character according to Ace.

Remarks on engine technology come by way of my father, a veteran tuner/mechanic with decades of cars behind him. The Swift, for him, is at least a generation behind in the engine and drive-train technology purveyed by the leading manufacturers.

The 1.5-liter, four-cylinder with variable valve timing reminds us of powerplants very popular in the late '90s. Though punchy with a decent amount of pull, flat out in the Swift means a substantial amount of fuel consumption for such a small car. Amusement has its price obviously.

Straightforward assessment

Funny that it takes a female in this bunch of would-be critics to grab the Swift by the steering wheel and really give a straightforward assessment of the car. The animated Ene, who says she multitasks for work, is practically one of the boys but her quotes are priceless. It is an opinion as honest as it is funny and heartfelt as the snippets from her extensive review will prove.

"I check her out (the Swift)—wow, both visors have mirrors which means easy simultaneous lip gloss application for me and my girlfriend when we go out; the dashboard is designed nicely and everything is easy to find—practically idiot proof; the light turns on when you pull the key out… very considerate since you still have to negotiate finding your bag and other things before you get off. Now if I can only find how the trunk opens….

Driving was one of the most enjoyable experiences ever—the car has a remote for the radio on the steering wheel! It made flipping through the radio stations so easy. And if anyone is like me, who likes changing stations scanning songs on the radio, this is a dream.

I love the way she drives—no hiccups when you speed up to overtake, automatic shifting is smooth and maneuvering is easy. I don't normally drive really fast, but this car just makes you want to—like being young all over again. I know I will miss her terribly.

Anxiety of separation

As I get into the driver's seat, I take a good look around. I really feel sad that I have to part with the car! No more little joystick again to adjust the side mirrors. How I will remember the laughter at that moment that we discovered the small button to open the trunk… Ah, the anxiety of separation! I love this car. It rocks."

So there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, the Suzuki Swift through the eyes and minds of people just like yourself. As varied as the people and their comments are, the Swift is consistent in making its personality known. It is a simple car that is designed well and has proven to be a bundle of fun to drive. Mindset of a jaded motoring hack notwithstanding, I have to agree with these people.

Goodyear says Detroit, Akron rival Milan as fashion capital—in tires

THE WORDS "STYLE" AND "Fashion" are usually reserved for Milan, Paris and New York, but last January the new products were appearing in Detroit. And while some think of the latest designs as being unveiled in a stroll down the runway, these models are built for the highway.

The "models" in question are the new vehicles that were introduced at the North American International Auto Show, one of the world's largest auto shows attracting attendees from around the globe. While the cars garner primary attention, the most perceptive show-goers noticed the "shoes" of the new models—the only points that touch the road.

Tires can be fashionable

Auto shows are an opportunity to prove that tires can be fashionable, too," said Paul Maxwell, a principal designer for the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. "While they provide functional capabilities such as carrying the vehicle load, gripping ability in all kinds of weather, and traction for starting and stopping, tires actually can complement the vehicle's appearance."

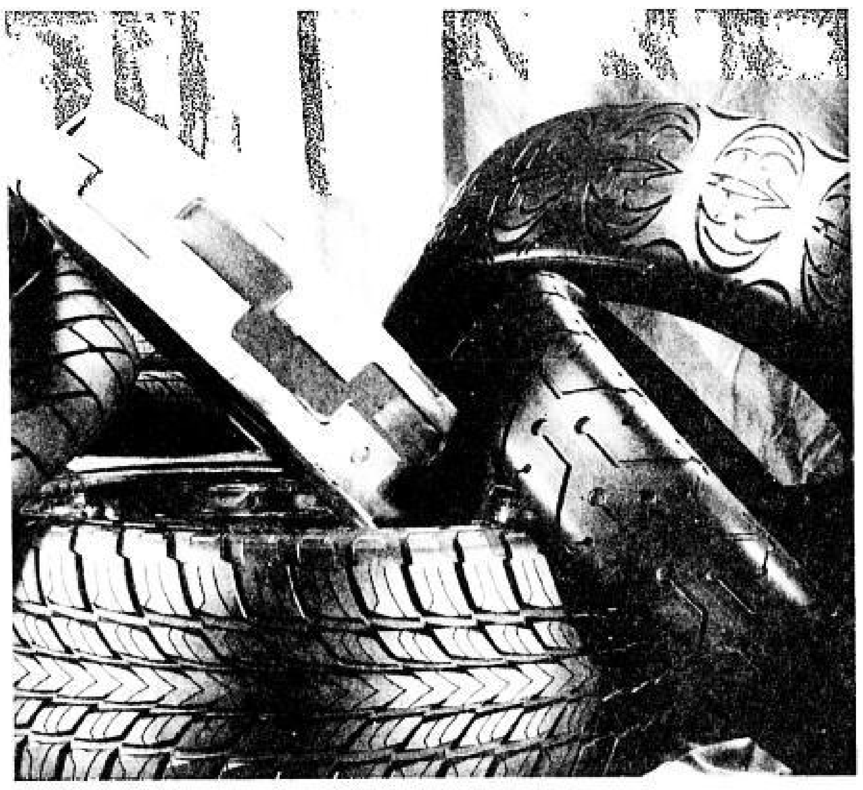
At the Detroit show, Goodyear tires were seen on high-image vehicles such as these 2007 concepts: Jeep Trailhawk, Ford Interceptor and Chrysler Nassau.

"We are always excited to see the latest developments that come out of the auto show because it provides a preview for what we will see next both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region," said Maurice Tan, vice president of Marketing for Goodyear Asia Pacific.

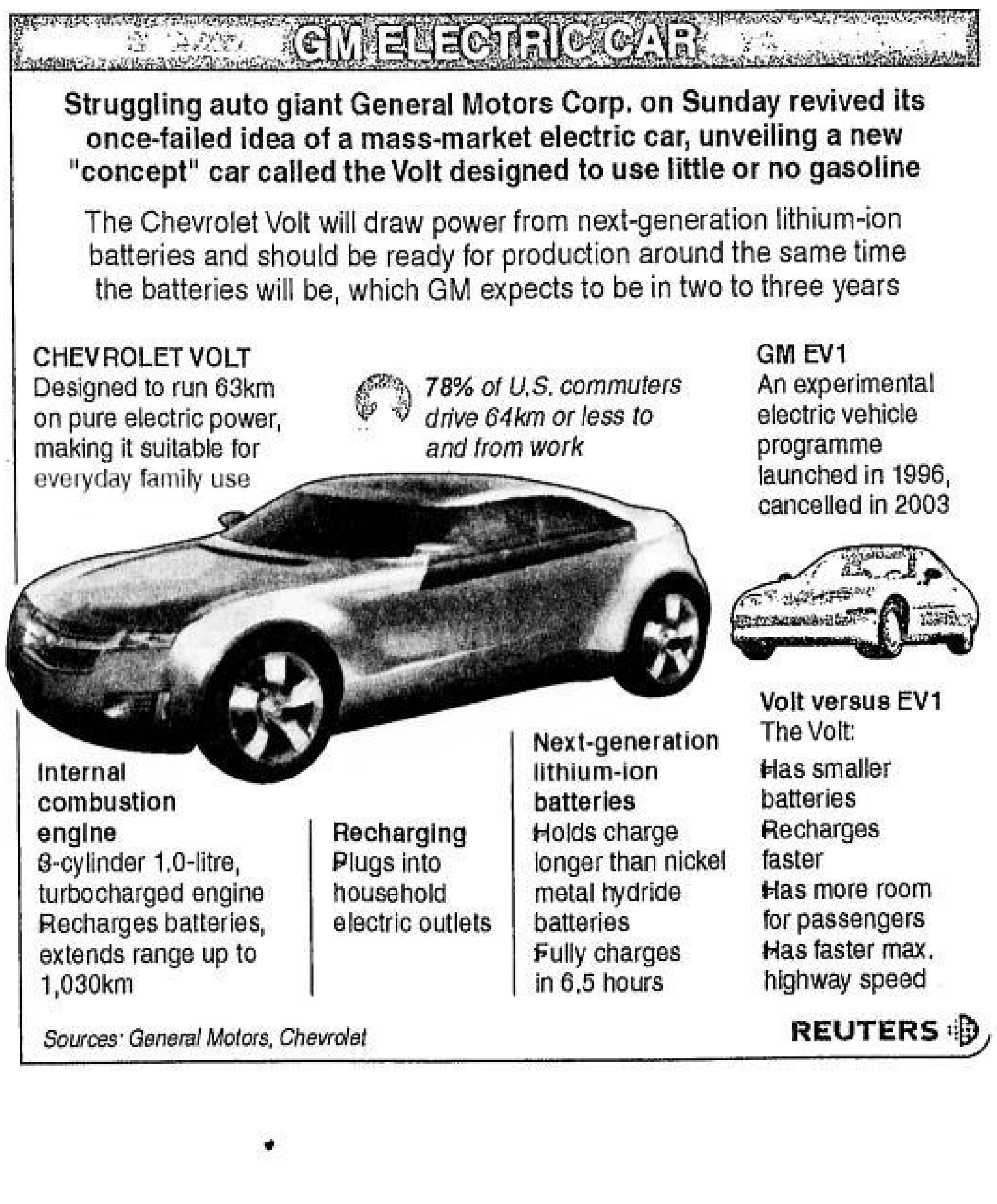
Lifestyle product

Each year, more new vehicles come equipped with Goodyear tires than any other brand. For years, Goodyear engineers and tire designers have worked with teams from the automobile manufacturers to create special tires for the vehicles that will be introduced at the Detroit show. Many of the concept vehicles, or at least a variation of the show vehicle, are eventually produced.

"Tires are increasingly becoming a lifestyle product as is evident from the auto show. Goodyear continues to be a leader in tire innovation and developing new concepts that improve not just the handling of a car but also its appearance," Tan commented.



AMONG PAST examples of Goodyear's one-of-a-kind concept tires for auto shows and other activities are the "Snakeskin" tire (for the 1997 Dodge Copperhead concept car), the "gray block" tire (for the Ford MA concept in 2003), a "techno-tread" tire (for the 2003 Dodge Tomahawk concept motorcycle), a "sweeping" tread design (for the 2005 Ford Shelby GR-1 concept), and even the "Bat" tire (for the famous Batmobile movie car).



GM ELECTRIC CAR

Struggling auto giant General Motors Corp. on Sunday revived its once-failed idea of a mass-market electric car, unveiling a new "concept" car called the Volt designed to use little or no gasoline

The Chevrolet Volt will draw power from next-generation lithium-ion batteries and should be ready for production around the same time the batteries will be, which GM expects to be in two to three years

CHEVROLET VOLT
Designed to run 63km on pure electric power, making it suitable for everyday family use

78% of U.S. commuters drive 64km or less to and from work

GM EV1
An experimental electric vehicle programme launched in 1996, cancelled in 2003

Internal combustion engine
- 3-cylinder 1.0-litre, turbocharged engine
- Recharges batteries, extends range up to 1,030km

Recharging
- Plugs into household electric outlets

Next-generation lithium-ion batteries
- Holds charge longer than nickel metal hydride batteries
- Fully charges in 6.5 hours

Volt versus EV1
The Volt:
- Has smaller batteries
- Recharges faster
- Has more room for passengers
- Has faster max. highway speed

Sources: General Motors, Chevrolet

REUTERS

'Diamond in the . . .

From page B2-1

airbags, antilock braking system with electronic brake distribution and side-impact bars, sidewall reinforcement for cargo holding strength, double-wall design for structural integrity with superior corrosion resistance, and high-tensile and galvanized steel panels all throughout the body.

But knowing Filipinos, the sad thing about owning such a handsome beast is that it would most likely suffer the fate of many exotic animals in zoos—caged and domesticated. Guys and gals, if you don't let this animal frolic in its natural surroundings every now and then, you're just using half of what you paid for.

Rapid expansion and quality control

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

TOYOTA MOTOR CORP. IS A MARKET-GOBBLING giant whose manufacturing system has won admirers and imitators across the global auto industry. In 2006, Toyota and its two affiliates, Hino Motors and Daihatsu, produced 9.04 million vehicles worldwide, gaining 12 percent of the global car market while its Big Three US rivals lost sales and had to axe jobs and shut down assembly plants. This year, with its plan to increase output to 9.42 million vehicles, Toyota is expected to overtake General Motors as the world's biggest auto manufacturer and Ford Motor Co. as No. 2 in the lucrative US car market, a position that Ford has held since the 1920s.

But rapid global expansion and success are taking a toll on Toyota in terms of quality control. Last year, Toyota recalled 1.2 million cars in Japan and 814,000 vehicles in the United States. In 2005 in the US, Toyota recalled 2.2 million vehicles.

Recalls

Aside from the surge in recalls, Toyota's reputation for flawless craftsmanship was further tarnished last July when Japan's transport ministry ordered the company to report on quality-control improvements after local police accused three executives of allegedly covering up vehicle defects over an eight-year period. In June, before this embarrassing rebuke took place, a J.D. Power survey of American owners of new cars ranked Hyundai Motors of South Korea above Toyota for the first time.

What is Toyota, the paragon of Japanese quality and the topic of numerous books and business school seminars, doing to correct this slide in production standards? As it builds new factories to ramp up production by half a million vehicles annually, Toyota needs to hire enough qualified engineers to design all the vehicles in its ever-expanding lineup and to run quality checks before new models hit the road. Toyota's engineer shortage is one of the biggest challenges the company faces as it races to expand.

Analysts also blame Toyota's mushrooming quality control problems on its failure to inculcate its fabled obsession with perfect craftsmanship and *kaizen*, or constant improvement, among its growing legions of overseas factory workers and managers.

To address the problem of raising quality in the face of rapid overseas expansion, Japan's biggest auto manufacturer is institutionalizing the "Toyota Way" worldwide by disseminating its corporate culture and manufacturing and management methods to 200,000 workers at 27 plants overseas.

The Toyota Way

In 2001, Toyota first set the Toyota Way down in writing upon the orders of Fujio Cho, the chair who, as CEO at the time, helped orchestrate the company's rapid overseas expansion. The following year, the Toyota Institute was established in a lakeside town near Toyota City to groom promising executives for leadership by teaching them Toyota's business creed and prized management secrets. These executives are then sent as missionaries of sort for the Toyota Way to offices around the world.

So far, the Institute has trained some 700 foreign Toyota executives. Toyota is building similar institutes in Thailand and Kentucky. The objective is to prevent the Toyota Way from getting more and more diluted as Toyota grows overseas. Toyota aims to stay true globally to its original mission to win customers with quality cars and pamper them with excellent service.

Still, transplanting Toyota's culture to foreign markets is not easy. Some managers at Toyota factories fail to follow some of the company's most basic tenets, such as allowing workers to stop factory lines when they spot defects. New American hires often have difficulty at first with some Toyota practices, such as the white bulletin board publicly displaying the work targets of individual workers and their success or failure in meeting those targets. In emerging markets such as India and China, shoddy service at Toyota sales subsidiaries has been reported. As a former Toyota accountant commented, the Institute was founded because Toyota is afraid of growing too fast and losing control, but it's still too early to know if it will work.

Commitment

Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the intense commitment with which Toyota tackles the task of cultural education and the examples set by people like Toyota chair Cho and president Katsuaki Watanabe who have lived the Toyota Way their entire professional lives, will convert many workers and managers worldwide into true believers. The Toyota Way makes sense: "lean production," a flexible system where among other things workers are able to switch between different tasks; "mutual ownership of problems," "*genchi genbutsu*" or solving problems at the source instead of behind desks and the "*kaizen* mind," an unending sense of crisis behind the company's relentless drive to improve.

Add to these slogans Watanabe's favorite words: *jimichi* (steady), *tetteiteki* (thorough) and *guchoku* (having an open mind) and you may no longer wonder how Toyota has gained a yawning lead over its US competitors, other Japanese companies and upcoming carmakers like South Korea and China.

(With reports from The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and Agence France Press)

Rapid global expansion and success are taking a toll on Toyota in terms of quality control

RP motorists say goodbye to ozone depleting CFCs

THE GOVERNMENT HAS STEPPED UP ITS efforts to curb the depletion of the ozone layer through an administration order that phases out harmful chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in car aircon systems. (R12, an ozone depleting substance, is still widely used as a cooling agent in auto air-conditioning systems.)

"The Land Transportation Office (LTO) and the Philippine Ozone Desk (POD) are spearheading the implementation of Joint Administrative Order 3 which calls for the total phaseout (zero importation) of R12 in the country by year 2010," POD program manager Ella Deocadiz said. "The Philippines is one of the 189 country signatories to the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone Layer," she added.

Requirement

Under the administrative order, the inspection of car aircon systems has become a requirement for the renewal and the registration of vehicles. All vehicles from model 1999 up are required to have an HFC-134a (R134a or non-CFC) air-conditioning system. Older models (1998 and below) with R12-using air-conditioning system will still be allowed to register until the phaseout year of 2012.

"However they may opt to retrofit their air-conditioning system with alternative refrigerants, such as R-426A, which is the ozone-friendly drop-in replacement for R12," Deocadiz said.

Important factor

"The use of R-426A is an important factor in the government program to protect the ozone layer. It has zero ozone-depleting particles, is nonflammable and designed for auto air-conditioning systems. Another advantage of R-426A is it requires no system retrofitting and can be used as top-up," Cigi product manager Mayen Laurina said. "These regulations are an important step in the government program to reduce the emissions of ozone-depleting substances into the atmosphere. R-426A is environment-friendly and is the easy and long-term solution to replace CFCs in our cars."

Consolidated Industrial Gases Inc. (Cigi), the country's leading industrial gases supplier, is the first company in the Philippines to introduce R-426A technology. It is part of The Linde Group, which recently merged with The BOC Group and created a world-leading industrial gases and engineering company with an annual pro forma turnover of approximately 12.7 billion euro, operating profit (Ebit) of 1.6 billion euro and approximately 53,000 employees worldwide.

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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

Environmental awareness still high in Isuzu agenda

IPC'S donation of thousands of mangroves in Alaminos, Pangasinan is regarded as among the carmaker's commendable corporate social responsibility initiatives.

By Charles E. Buban

WITH HIGH FUEL COSTS and growing environmental awareness among consumers, the vast majority of today's are reshaping their corporate strategies.

In the case of Isuzu, it's not just developing lower-emitting, fuel-efficient and quiet diesel engines.

"It's also about giving back to the community as well as to mother nature. As a matter of fact, even before environmental awareness has become a hot issue, the company since 2002, has been doing its share educating young people as well as the whole community," said Isuzu Philippines Corp. president Yoshifumi Komura.

Indeed in 2002, IPC sponsored a puppet show that instilled the value of environmental protection to an audience composed mostly of children from Biñan and Santa Rosa in Laguna where IPC is based.

Sensible carmaker

"In spite of the many successes in marketing and vehicle sales here in the Philippines, IPC remains a very sensible carmaker and will continue work to make the country a better place," Komura said.

To prove his point Komura recalled that in 2003, the company donated 10,000 tilapia fingerlings to Laguna de Bay. That same year, IPC donated garbage traps (to prevent them from reaching the lake) to barangays Macabling and Tagapo in Santa Rosa, Laguna.

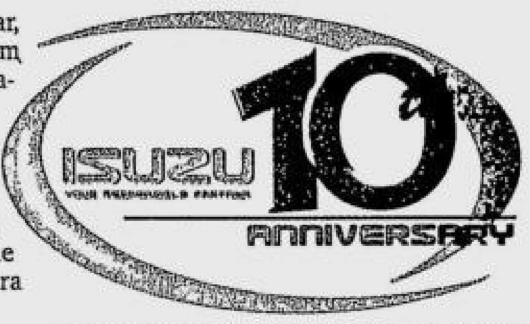
"In 2004, IPC donated a two-classroom building to Biñan National High School and in the following year, Isuzu embarked on a tree-planting project donating 15,000 narra seedlings to help establish a man-made forest strip in Atimonan, Quezon," Komura said.

Donated mangroves

To celebrate its anniversary last year, IPC donated thousands of mangroves and planted them in a 5-hectare mangrove park in Barangay Sabangan in Alaminos City, Pangasinan which overlooks the Hundred Islands National Park.

IPC picked Alaminos in recognition of the city's strides in protecting its marine environment and for its sustainable program in preserving the beauty of the Hundred Islands.

"The company is not only in the business of selling reliable and durable vehicles for the family and business. IPC is also serious about its role as a responsible partner of its loyal customers and the community at large. And there is nothing more important than helping customers and the community prosper while at the same time helping protect and preserve the environment," Komura explained. He said that he expects another similar event this year as the company celebrates a decade of operation here in the Philippines.


ISUZU
10th
ANNIVERSARY
IPC'S winning 10th anniversary logo design

10th anniversary logo

This early Komura informed that IPC has unveiled its 10th anniversary logo designed by their own staff.

The logo submitted by Joan Lazaro of IPC's internal and quality audit section bested hundreds of other entries in a company-wide competition.

"With the anniversary logo, we now have a banner that speaks much of IPC's resolve in taking the extra mile in helping build a better environment," Komura said. "Expect us to make another meaningful contribution to the community this year while we continue our main mission of delivering better vehicles and innovating new solutions to clean up existing diesel technology."

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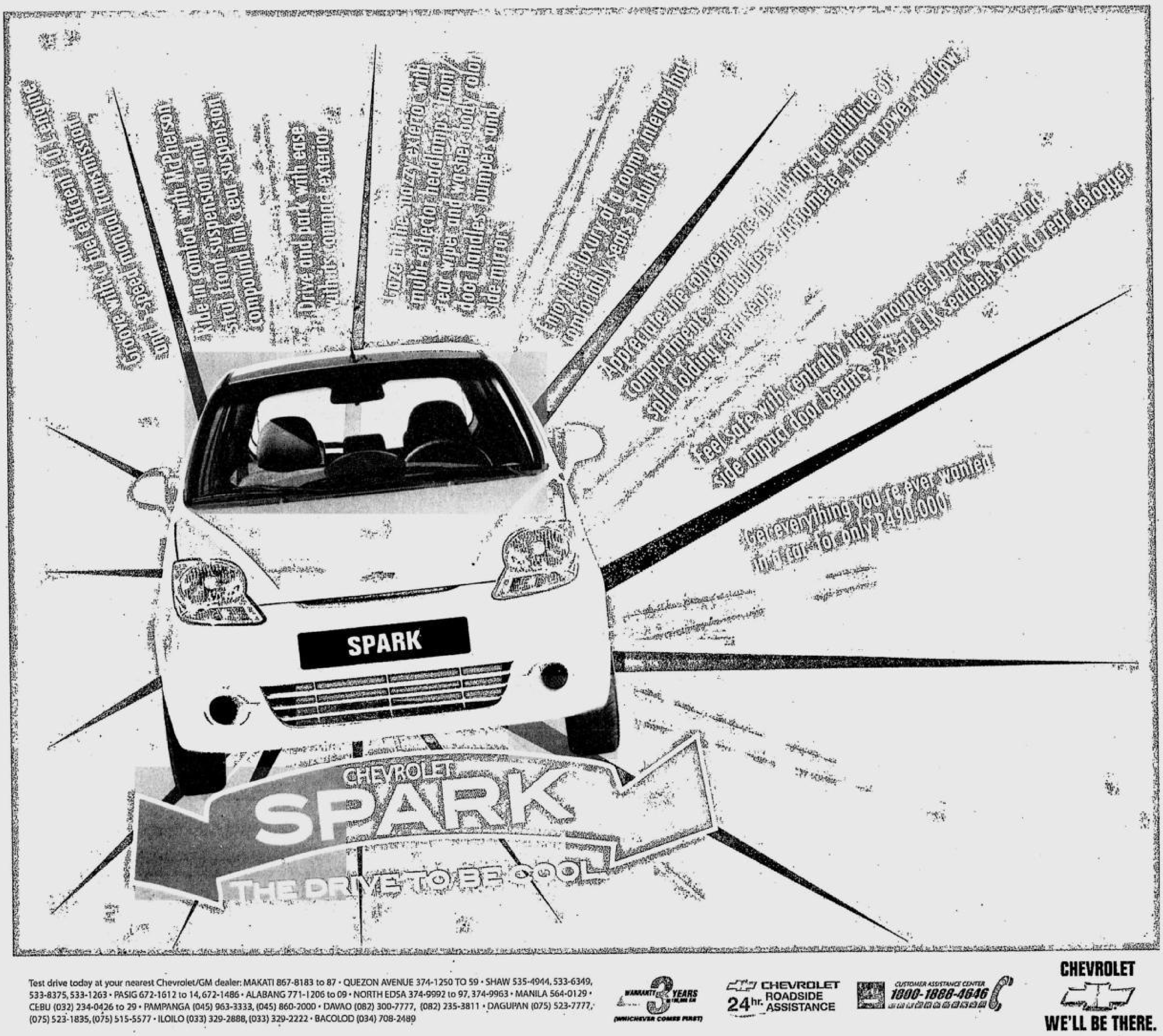
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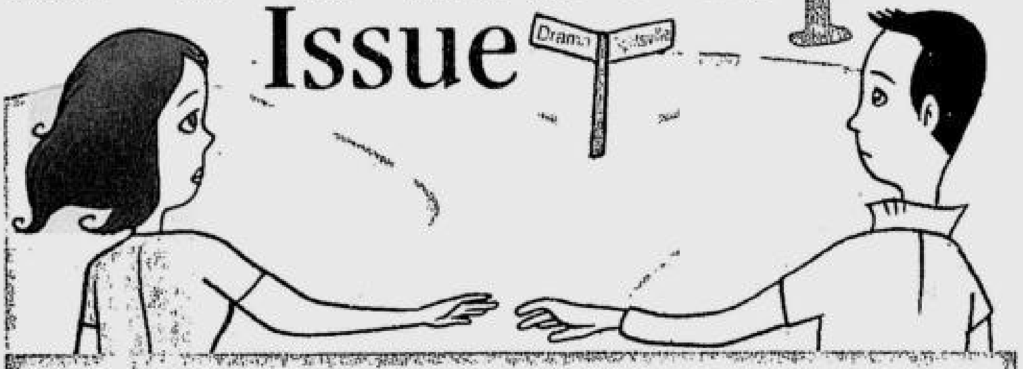
How-am-I supposed-to-carry-on

The Breakup Issue



Last week we all OD'd on love. This week 2bU! explores what happens when the love is gone

When it's time to say goodbye, when you should hold on, how to bounce back, how to get closure, which songs to listen to, memorable breakups, musings on goodbyes—all these and more are part of 2bU!'s special breakup issue.

E-mail your breakup thoughts to 2bu@inquirer.com.ph

Remembering a special friend

By Angela V. Ignacio
2bU! Correspondent

VALENTINE'S DAY started out especially dismal for me this year. It's not because I've been boyfriendless for what has seemed like eons, but because of the dream I had the night before.

He was the only one who could make me feel extra-special, and I missed him terribly

I was by the seashore, digging my toes into the fine white sand and crystal waters of my favorite retreat. I turned to look up into the smiling face of the person whose hand I had been holding, the laughter in his eyes mirroring my own. I felt like such a kid again, happy and carefree. But as I reached up to hug him, I woke up with a deep, indefinable ache in my heart.

I didn't even have to wonder why I had that dream. It was Bittersweet Day, after all—the day couples become extra sweet and single people extra bitter. The day that rubs salt into heart wounds old and new. The day that painfully reminds you, more than any other day, of the fact that you're spending it alone. But worst of all, it's the day that brings back bittersweet memories of the one you miss the most, especially if you're the one to blame for your own misery.

He and I had a strange kind of relationship. As far as my materialistic, demanding self was concerned, it was often a take-and-take situation, but he never complained. If he didn't give me what I needed (or at least, what I thought I needed), I simply sulked and ignored him, and he endured it patiently until my tantrums blew over. That might have been relatively forgivable in teenagers, but not when you're in your 20s.

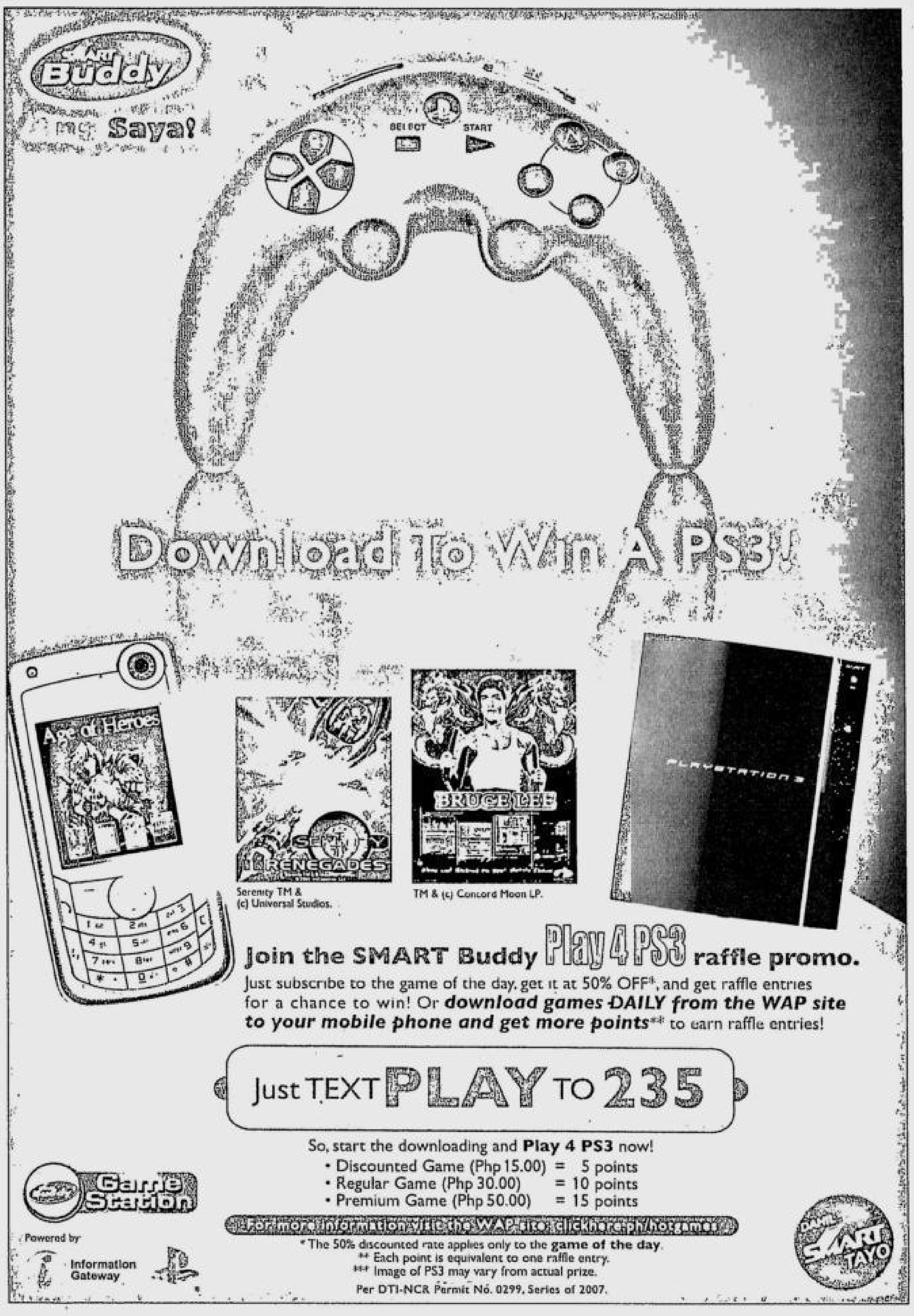
Oh, I loved him; there was no doubt in my mind about that. When I wasn't being a brat, I tried to do everything I could to make him happy, to show that he was the most important person in my life. In fact, I'd often tell him that he would always come first.

Sadly enough, my studies and all other preoccupations nudged him down to second, then third, then finally at the very bottom of my list of priorities. It was sad that I only thought of him whenever I needed something from him, but I couldn't help it. Although guilt relentlessly nips at my heels, it was easy to i[illegible]re it when you're up to yo[illegible] eyebrows in exams.

Then, after one particularly gruesome day, I turned to him for some much-needed comfort. He didn't respond. I called and called, but there was no answer. I kept telling myself that he'd come back eventually like he always did. In the meantime, I became more wrapped up in schoolwork and occasionally distracted myself with petty crushes that lasted just about as long as a guppy's attention span.

Sometimes I'd allow myself to wonder if he was ever going to

REMEMBERING/ C2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Bittersweet *symphony*

By Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent

ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

SO I'M INTO SELF-TORTURE. Last Valentine's Day, I resolved to watch Dulaang Sibol's "Sinta" alone simply because I wanted to wallow in melodrama (generated by myself, not the play).

Now, "Sinta" is not a play you usually watch by your lonesome. "It's a play for holding hands," said Onofre Pagsanjan, the founder of Dulaang Sibol, in a short speech before the play. The last time I watched "Sinta," I was with a date. Then all of a sudden, I was watching one of the most romantic Filipino plays on Valentine's Day with my brother (a last-minute companion because I chickened out of watching the play alone).

The play was to be the acid test for my feelings about relationships. Would I feel bitter about romance after watching it? I couldn't tell after. But earlier this year, after watching a feeble romantic movie, I realized that throughout the entire film, I was unmoved by all the touching lines and sweet gestures.

At first, I thought that it was probably just the movie, with its all too predictable ending and lame attempts at romance.

I thought that it might have been the distracting gray hair of the leading man, or the fact that I found it hard to relate to the film's premise (love in the presence of sickness and death). However, seeing my 18-year-old sister giggle at the cheesy lines made me realize that it was not just the movie. It was romantic movies in general. No, not just romantic movies—It was the world!

Things weren't always like that for me. One time, several dynasties ago, I was at lunch with a distraught friend. We were, of course, talking about guys: She was weeping over a particularly annoying male specimen, and I was trying to comfort her.

"There's a good guy out there for you," I said, smug in my blissful coupledom and confident in the inherent goodness of men. She looked up at me, hiccupped and shook her head. "That's not my reality," she said.

A high-pitched giggle interrupted our talk. A love-struck pair was making goo-goo eyes at each other in the next table. They cuddled and shared drinks and poked each other. My friend and I stared at our plates and shuffled uncomfortably.

"So, what did you say again about that guy?" I asked, trying to shift her focus from the couple voted Most Likely To Visit Victoria Court After Lunch. It didn't work.

Fed up, my friend rolled her eyes and hissed: "*Huuuu, ganyan kayo ngayon, pero magbi*-break *din kayo*!" The boyfriend looked up, shrugged, and resumed the exploration of his girlfriend's thigh. The girl dug her nose in his chest and giggled.

I had to restrain my friend from throwing her water glass at the twosome.

Same situation

A little more than year after that incident, I found myself in nearly the same situation my friend was in after I broke up with my boyfriend: smug couples annoy me now, and I find it hard not to snicker whenever I hear people my age making wedding plans.

So when Mr. Pagsanjan shared a quote from "The Sandman" before "Sinta" started, I found myself blinking very fast to stop my eyes from welling up.

He said: "Have you ever been in love? Horrible, isn't it? It makes you so vulnerable. It opens your chest and it opens your heart and it means someone can get inside you and mess you up. You build up all these defenses. You build up this whole armor for years so nothing can hurt you, then one stupid person, no different from any other stupid person, wanders into your stupid life. You give them a piece of you. They don't ask for it. They do something dumb one day like kiss you, or smile at you, and then your life isn't your own anymore."

> Ironically enough, I became more aware of Valentine's Day after my relationship ended

He continued, "Love takes hostages. It gets inside you. It eats you out and leaves you crying in the darkness, so a simple phrase like 'Maybe we should just be friends' or 'How very perceptive' turns into a glass splinter working its way into your heart. It hurts. Not just in the imagination. Not just in the mind. It's a soul-hurt, a body-hurt, a real gets-inside-you-and-rips-you-apart pain. Nothing should be able to do that. Especially not love."

Before the breakup, Valentine's Day for me was just another excuse for the malls to hold sales. Ironically enough, however, I became more aware of the day after my relationship ended. Suddenly, the frilly red decor around the malls and bouquets of flowers seemed to taunt me, when I had paid no attention to them before.

While my Valentine's Day wasn't as bad as I had expected (I had dinner with a bunch of similarly single friends and we all pretended to mutilate a heart-shaped balloon), I thought of the things I still missed about being in a relationship: flowers for no reason, marathons of "The Simpsons" at my house and impromptu waltzes on the street while taking moonlit walks.

For the meantime, the moonlit walks have been replaced by epic videoke sessions and long talks over dessert with friends. When I'm with girls, the talk invariably turns to men, and we all take turns dismissing them as insensitive twerps—not a logical or helpful exercise, but therapeutic and fun in its own way.

Some time ago, I went out with a group of friends. "Men are jerks," one of them proclaimed. I bobbed my head in agreement, and the third one in our group gasped.

"Wow, you're actually agreeing! But isn't that being bitter, considering that you just got out of a relationship?"

"Bitter isn't always bad," I said. "There's a pleasant sort of bitterness, like rich dark chocolate. There are days when I crave for jellybeans and caramel candy, but too many sweets give me a headache. This is my dark chocolate phase, and I'm going to enjoy it."

E-mail the author at biancaconsunji@yahoo.com

* * *

Jungle *girl*

By Mariel Kierulf Asiddao

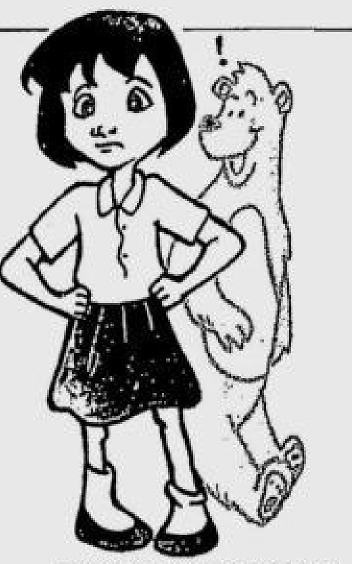
ILLUSTRATION ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

I WAS CALLED MOWGLI THEN.

I laugh now when I think of the nicknames I once earned. But I hated them. Especially Mowgli.

Mowgli was the kid from the animated film "The Jungle Book." His best friend was Baloo the bear and his protector was Bagheera the panther. He was raised by wolves and he lived in trees. He swung from vine to vine like an orangutan, and he wore only a red loincloth, just like any jungle boy.

My aunt gave me the nickname Mowgli. I hated it the most among all the nicknames I had. I wasn't primitive like this boy. I wasn't even a boy to begin with. She said I looked like him because I was skinny, I was dark, and my short hair made me look like a boy. I was the opposite of the chubby, cute and chinky-eyed kids who got all the attention from adults.

When I was a kid, I was so thin that people joked I would prick them whenever my elbows or knees touched them. I'd sit on adults' laps and they would put me down, saying, "your buttocks are too hard." So in my picture with Santa Claus, I was sitting on the floor.

Because of my thinness, adults would ask my mom if I was sick or something. My aunt even told me that I was thin because I had worms inside my stomach. She said I needed to take Combantrin or some other *pampurga*.

I also loved playing outside. I loved beaches, swimming in the sea, and playing in the sand. It wasn't long before I got really dark because of it. I became so insecure of being, well, too brown that I felt I looked like burnt meat. I was Amazon-boy dark.

My best friend in elementary had porcelain-like skin and chinky eyes. Being the ugly big-nosed Mowgli girl that I was, I could not compare to her, and I was often jealous since she would be chosen to play the best and cutest parts in school plays. She was the perfect Mary for a *belen* or a Christmas play. I forget now how many times she got to play the angel, but I remember she had her own set of angel wings, one that she wore more than once. I didn't get to wear angel wings in my childhood, not even once.

But I played Joseph, Jesus' foster father—a male role. I usually got male roles because I had short hair, another feature that made me look uglier. My aunt insisted that my hair should be cut short, for less fuss. So you can imagine how jealous I was of braids and pigtails.

When I was in Grade 4, I had very short hair that in pictures I would be mistaken for my mother's unknown son. Her friends would ask, "Who is your little boy? I haven't seen him before."

Outgrowing Mowgli

So I had truly earned my nickname. I was skinny. I was dark. I looked like a boy. Because of that, I felt insecure and I didn't participate too much in school activities. I felt that the pretty and popular kids had more talent and intelligence than I had, since I was just an Amazon-jungle kid.

When I entered a different school for my secondary education, the jokes didn't cease, but it was then that I felt a little better about myself. I began outgrowing Mowgli when I filled out my bust and my hips, but the jokes had a new target. My classmates joked about my nose, which was a cross between *kamatis* and *kalabasa*.

I got through those jokes. My friends and I matured, and in time the jokes were just silly reminders of physical imperfections that could easily be overlooked.

I'm grateful to my mom who made me see the person in me that others didn't. Mothers are gifts to daughters. My mom made me realize that I was so much more, even if I did try so hard to look pretty. I tried wearing trendy clothes and putting on makeup. But in the end, I realized that what defined me was not what I had on, but how I carried myself.

My mother taught me to think positive about life, about other people, about problems and about myself. She told me that if I considered myself a loser, people would also think that way. But if I felt good about myself, then other people would also feel good about me.

Now, some people think I look good, and I have attracted my share of suitors.

Mowgli and I are friends now, and I have accepted him as part of my childhood. I laugh as I think about it now—how silly it was that I thought I was too ugly that I had to hide my Amazon-boy looks.

I am thankful I realized quite early that I had much more to offer the world. I am good at writing. I have the natural curiosity of a researcher. I am a responsible leader—one skill I've developed through years of experience as the eldest sibling in the family. I have the wits and the guts to make it in this world, however hard it would be on me, on my dark skin, and on my tomato nose.

There will always be jokes about me. My ex-boyfriend used to rib me that I was a *Bumbay*, because compared to him, I was coffee. My dad also teases me that my nose expands when I laugh.

I join in these jokes and laugh as hard as they do. That's because I have accepted myself. Jokes about how I look will never really faze me now, or the way I feel about myself.

As Maria sings in West Side Story, "I feel pretty!" And I like myself just the way I am.

The 2bU! Self-Esteem Chronicles is published in partnership with Dove. Dove broadens the standards of beauty and improve self-esteem in order to inspire more women to care for themselves. Make a contribution to the Dove Self-Esteem Fund by purchasing Dove products. Proceeds from the fund are used to run BodyTalk, a self-esteem workshop to help young girls develop a positive self-image.

The author, 20, is a student at the College of Mass Communication, Univesity of the Philippines Diliman.

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DOVE RECENTLY LAUNCHED THE SELF-Esteem Fund, which will be used to run BodyTalk Workshops for young girls. In this connection, 2bU! wants to read your self-esteem story.

Share your story. Use the following questions as a guide.

Tell us about your childhood beauty insecurity. How did it develop? Did it make an impact on your self-confidence, your ability to reach your goals and maximize your potential? How did caring for yourself help you overcome your hang-ups? Do you have tips for building a positive self-image?

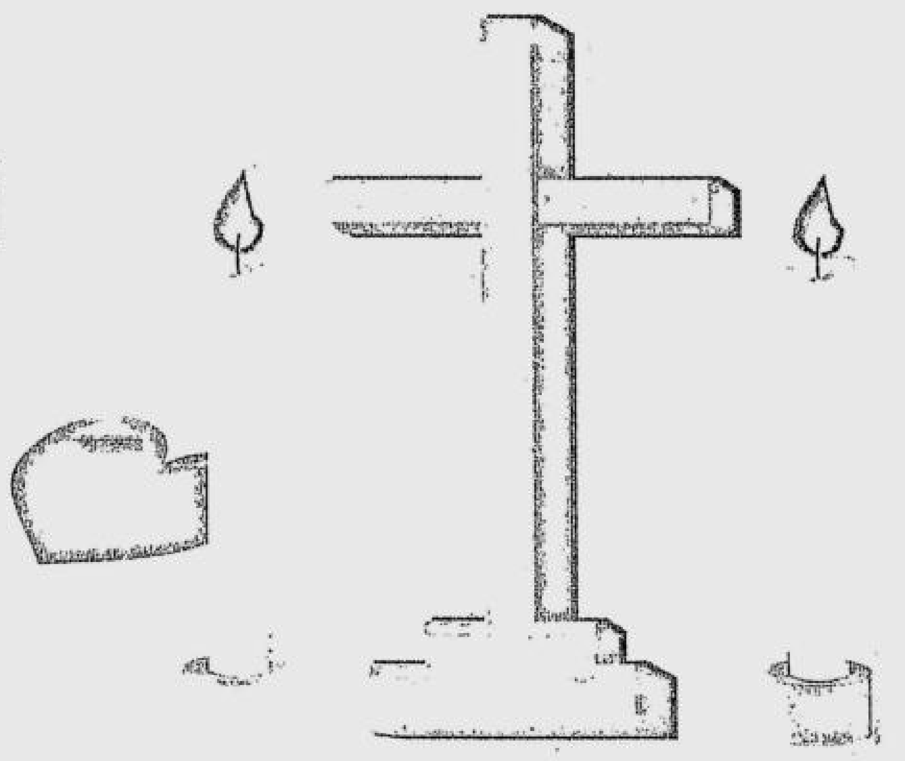
INQUIRER 2bU! and Dove will be running the Self-Esteem Chronicles for the next eight weeks, until March 14. One story will be chosen each week. Deadline of entries is every Saturday. Essays must be a maximum of 4,000 characters.

If your story is selected, it will be published in 2bU! and you will receive Dove gift packs and a limited-edition Dove Statement Tee designed by Kate Torralba.

Don't forget to choose which shirt statement you want ["A dark child can brighten your day"; "A chubby kid can live large"; "A short child can stand tall"; "100% real beauty"; and which size you will need: "I'm petite and a big dreamer" (bust: 26-28 inches); "I'm somewhere in between, but just as sweet" (29-32 inches); "I'm big and beautiful" (33-36 inches)].

E-mail your entries to selfesteemchronicles@gmail.com along with your name, age, contact info, school/office.

Remembering a special friend



From page C1

make me feel his presence again. But I'd instantly dismiss the thought, thinking that as long as I was doing fine on my own, I didn't need to worry about him. He wouldn't have wanted that, anyway. Before I knew it, I found myself not thinking about him at all, and I eventually fell to entertaining the one question I had been so afraid to ask: Had our relationship finally fallen apart?

Little did I know that the answer would come on the day of hearts. I had nearly reached my breaking point physically, mentally and emotionally, and the fact that I'd dreamed about us the night before didn't exactly help.

I was so stressed, not to mention a little heartsick, that I was ready to drop all the books I was juggling and crawl miserably into bed. Then, just when I was about to lose it, he surprised me with nothing less than a miracle: He had somehow convinced the higher-ups to postpone our practical exam, which I had been so unprepared for, so that I could have another chance to study for it.

As always, he knew exactly what I needed, and gave it to me when I needed it the most. It was his way of saying, "See? I'm here for you—always have been, and always will be. Nothing's impossible because I love you. Happy Valentine's Day."

It might not be the grandest or most romantic gift for most people, but it made me smile and think of him for the first time in ages. I remembered how he'd do thoughtful, unexpected gestures that brightened up my day no matter how awful it was. I felt his love in the things he did for me, big or small, and in the fact that he was there for me whenever I needed him, even when I thought I didn't.

He's the only one who could make me feel extra-special, and I missed him terribly.

Now, I've hardened my resolve. It's time to make the grand gesture, to show him how much I love him in spite of the way I've treated him. You can think of all the cheesiest love songs ever written, but I know we're way beyond that.

To heck with pride and possible ridicule. If he can stick by me through thick and thin, then I, too, can suffer anything and everything that life throws at me.

So, to my sorely missed special friend: I was wrong, and I'm really sorry. I know that I can't erase what I've done, and it might take a lifetime to make it up to you, but I'm willing to try and make it work. I promise I'll find more time for you, even though it's not even remotely half as much time as you've spent taking care of me.

I owe you that much, and much, much more. Because of you, I am everything I can be. I love and am loved in return. In you, I find my peace.

I love you, Lord. Belated Happy Valentine's Day.

E-mail the author at aoshi_no_miko@atenista.net

Music . . .

From page C4

Best line: Lying in your arms/ so close together/ didn't know just what I had/ now I toss and turn/ 'coz I'm without you/ how I'm missing you so bad

"Incomplete"

Artist: Sisqo

What it's about: Feeling like you have nothing, even if you have everything, now that you don't have the person you want to be with

Best line: I can make believe I have everything/ but I can't pretend that I don't see/ that without you girl my life is incomplete

"One Last Cry"

Artist: Brian McKnight

What it's about: Giving up and crying for the last time over someone

Best line: Gotta get over you/ nothing for me to do/ but have one last cry

"Right Here Waiting"

Artist: Richard Marx

What it's about: Although it seems to be about a long-distance love affair, this song can also be about wanting an ex-flame back

Best line: I wonder how we can survive this romance/ but in the end if I'm with you I'll take the chance

"The Hardest Thing"

Artist: 98 Degrees

What it's about: Saying bye-bye to someone even if you love her, just because you're committed to someone else

Best line: It's the hardest thing I'll ever have to do/ to look you in the eye and tell you I don't love you

"The Sign"

Artist: Ace of Base

What it's about: Finally realizing that it's best to split up

Best line: And I am happy now living without you

"The Heart of the Matter"

Artist: Don Henley (and an equally beautiful—possibly more beautiful—version by India Arie)

What it's about: Moving on and having a hard time doing it, and learning to forgive the ex who moved on first

Best line: I've been learning to live without you now but I miss you sometimes

"Where Are You Now"

Artist: Janet Jackson

What it's about: Wanting a second chance now that you're ready and more mature

Best line: Where, where are you now/ now that I'm ready to love you the way you loved me then

"You've Made Me Stronger"

Artist: Regine Velasquez

What it's about: Coming out a better person after a split

Best line: Oh, don't you know I'm not the one at the losing end

"You Oughta Know"

Artist: Alanis Morrissette

What it's about: Not handling a breakup pretty well and letting the ex know all about it

Best line: It was a slap in the face how quickly I was replaced

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

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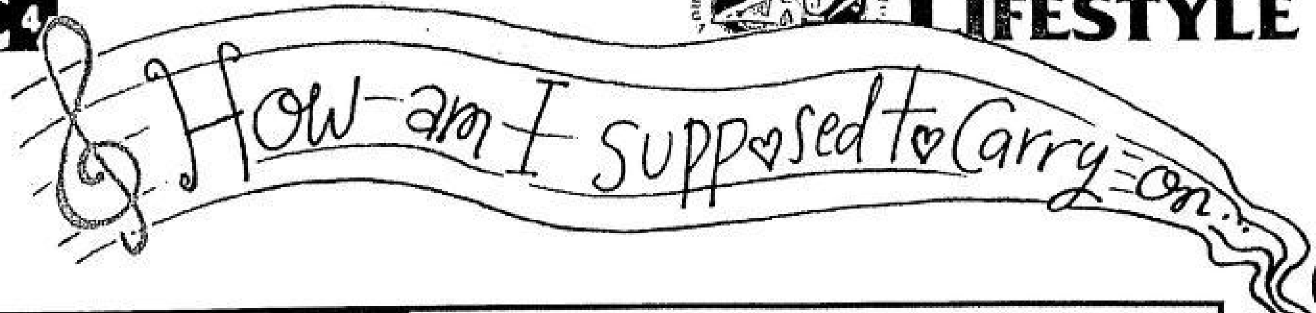
How am I supposed to carry on...

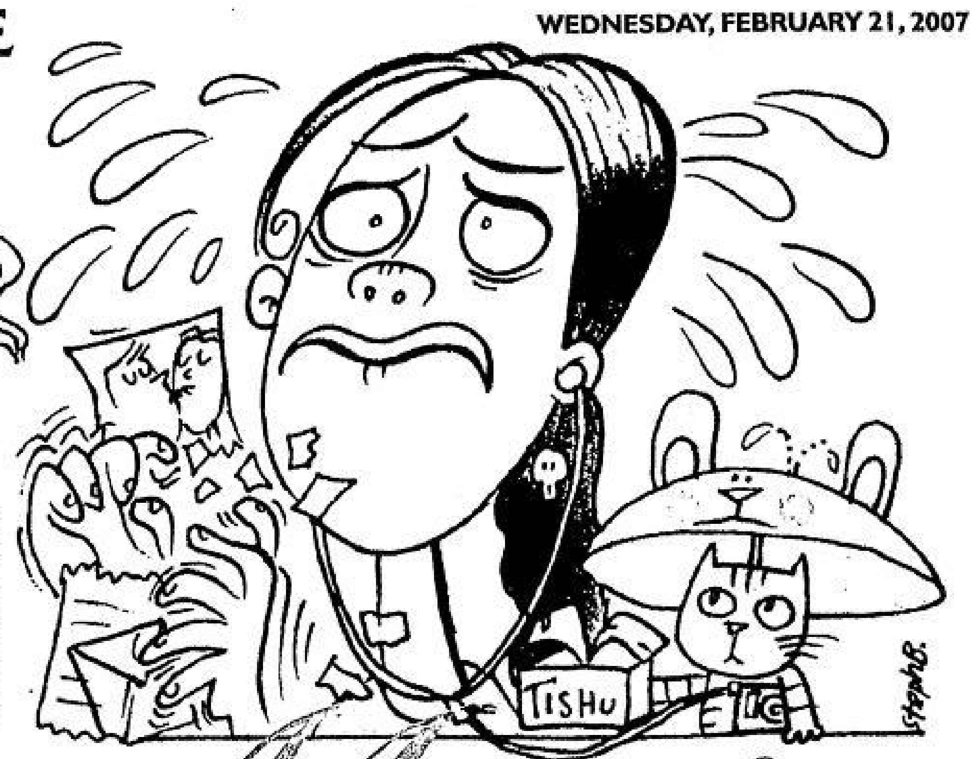

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Music for the broken-hearted

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

WHEN YOU HAVE JUST been dumped and you are crying your tear ducts out and you are pain personified, the last thing you want to do is chitchat.

Of course, there are those times when you want your friends to be shock absorbers, or when you want to do a scream-fest with the one who broke your heart and ruined your faith in the whole human race. But sometimes, you just want to shut up and be left alone. Sometimes, you don't want to listen to your well-meaning friends and their well-intentioned advice. You don't want to have a conversation with family members who are simply trying to cheer you up or divert your attention to something or someone else. Sometimes, the last thing you want to do is speak with your ex.

Times like these require only music. Music to make you feel better, music to make you remember and cry it all out, music to make you move on. Whatever you goal is, the following songs can be your best company to replace that ex-flame.

"Always Something There to Remind Me"

Artist: Naked Eyes

What it's about: Being reminded of the ex by everyone and everything you encounter

Best line: If you should find you miss the sweet and tender love we used to share/

Just go back to the places where we used to go, and I'll be there

"Butterfly"

Artist: Mariah Carey

What it's about: Letting go

Best line: For you'll never be mine until you know the way it feels to fly

"Breakdown"

Artist: Mariah Carey

What it's about: Showing everyone that you are okay after the breakup when, in reality, you're having a hard time coping

Best line: Underneath the guise of a smile/ gradually I'm dying inside

"Back Here"

Artist: BBMak

What it's about: Missing someone, wanting the person back

Best line: And I wonder, are you thinking of me/ 'coz I'm thinking of you/ and I wonder are you ever coming back in my life

"Don't Speak"

Artist: No Doubt

What it's about: Not wanting to hear the truth about a breakup

Best line: I don't need your reasons/ don't tell me 'coz it hurts

"End of the Road"

Artist: Boyz II Men

What it's about: Not being able to let go after the breakup

Best line: You belong to me/ I belong to you

"How Am I Supposed to Live Without You"

Artist: Michael Bolton

What it's about: Not knowing what to do now that a friend you've secretly loved for a long time is leaving

Best line: How am I supposed to carry on/ when all that I've been livin' for is gone

"Hunter"

Artist: Dido

What it's about: Wanting to be free

Best line: This queen you think you own wants to be a hunter again

"I Will Survive"

Artist: Gloria Gaynor

What it's about: Surviving after a breakup

Best line: I used to cry/ now I hold my head up high

"I Never Loved You Anyway"

Artist: The Corrs

What it's about: Realizing that a breakup isn't all that bad

Best line: I can't believe that I endured you for as long as I did

"I Drive Myself Crazy"

Artist: 'N SYNC

What it's about: Regretting one's decision to be free

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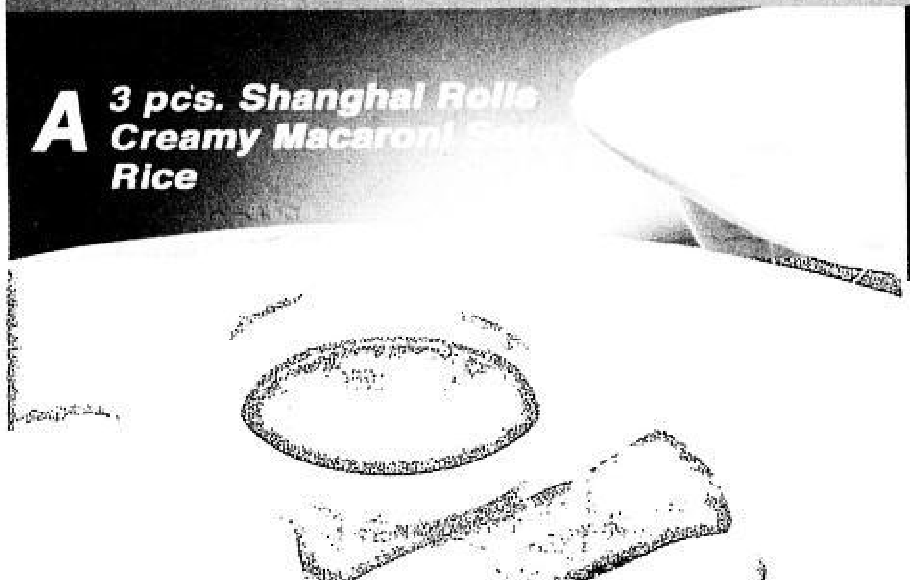

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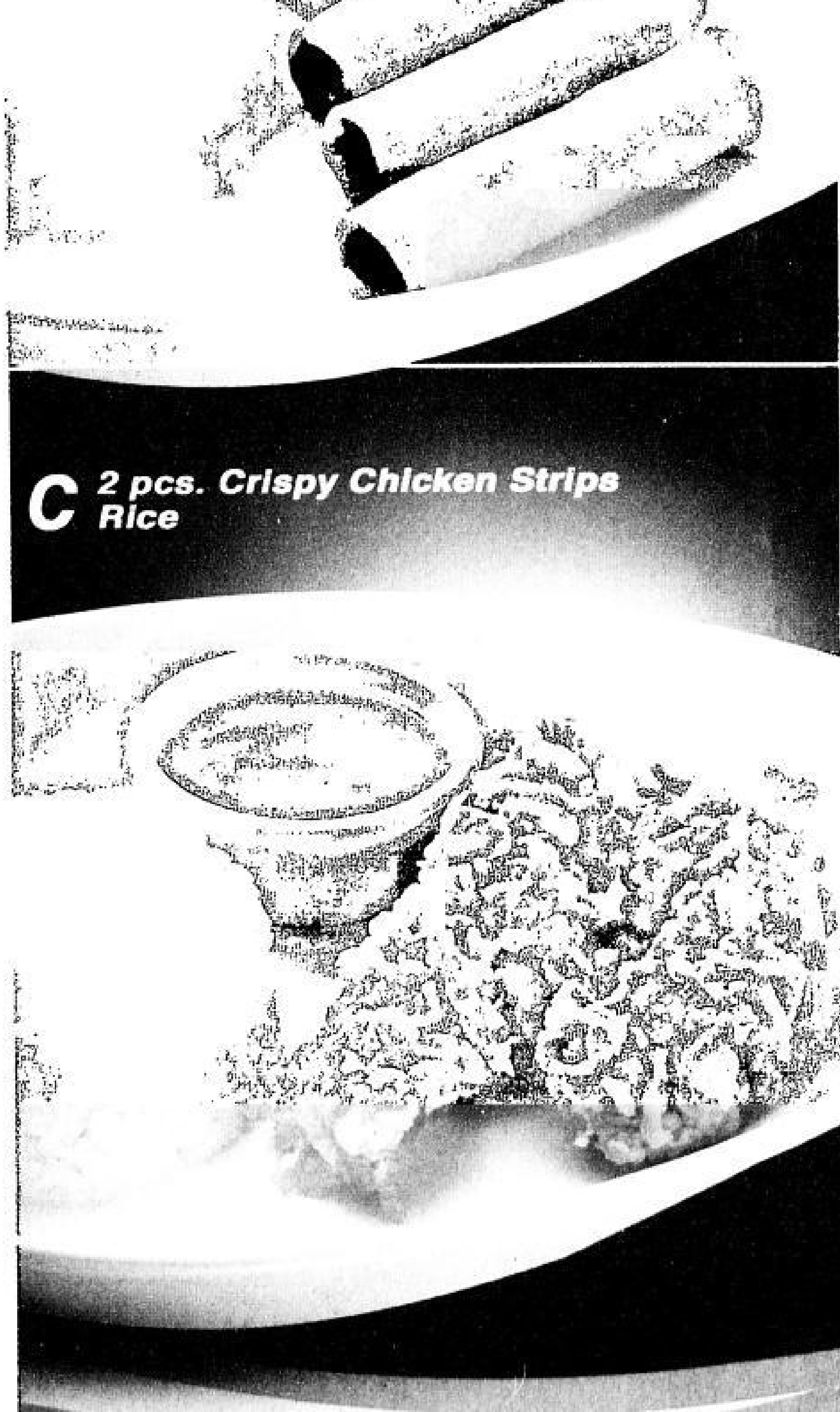

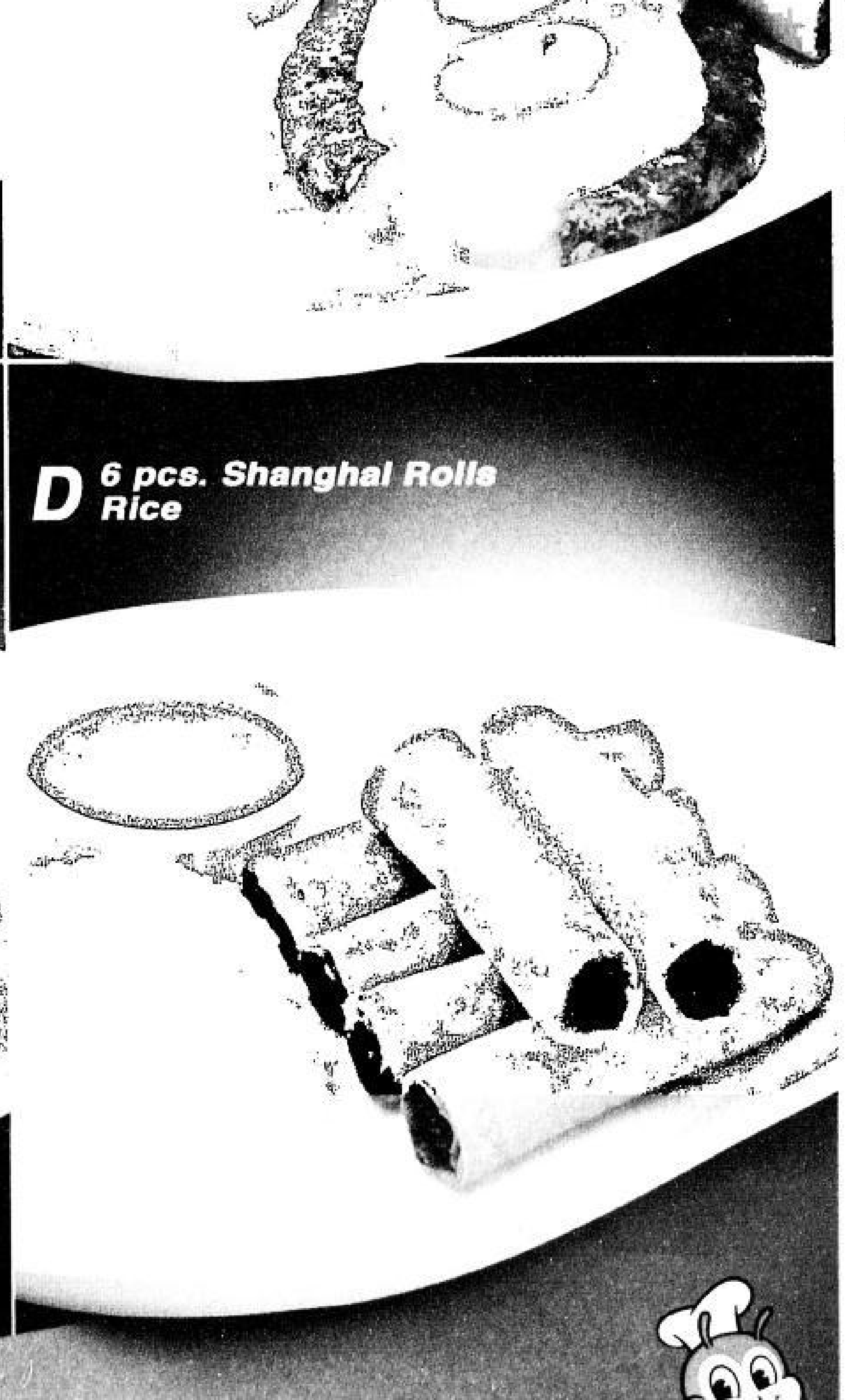

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Why it's better not to break up

Nino Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

For some couples, the fighting will never stop. But this doesn't mean you need to break up every time, or that you don't love each other anymore

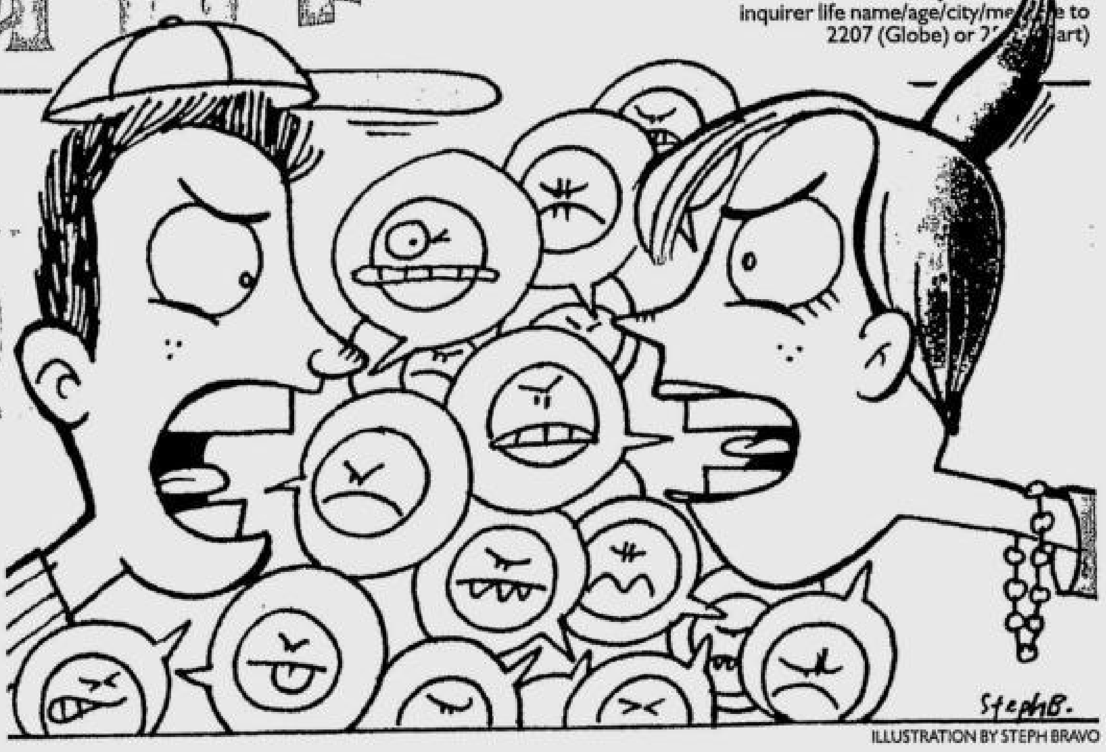


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

LAST FEBRUARY 14, MY girlfriend and I had a fight. Although we fight at least once every day, this fight was different in the sense that what we were fighting about was something new.

Just what were we arguing about? Well, it was Valentine's Day and I had nothing for her. No candlelit dinner in some fancy restaurant, which probably had no room for us, anyway. No chocolates, since she never ate them. No greeting card, since I text her every day and say "I love you" every night. And no flowers, since, uhm, I assumed she didn't like flowers.

As with our previous arguments, this particular fight snowballed into a major one in no more than 10 seconds. Hateful words were cinematically exchanged. Each other's mistakes were enumerated, machine gun-style. Reasons why we didn't like one another surfaced like dead bodies on the ocean. And as usual, I wanted to end the relationship. Throw in the towel, give it up, call it quits, head to splitsville, part ways, break up.

Sure, we've been together for six years now—and we've been living together for four years already—but during this particular fight, I wanted to throw it all away, our love. Shoot all the reasons why we should stay together. It was very clear to me why we should've broken up a long time ago.

Incompatibilities

First of all, we are incompatible. We are very different from one another when it comes to a lot of things.

For example, I am the vocal, expressive, touchy-feely kind while she is the shy, silent, non-confrontational type. I always grab her hand first whenever we're at the mall, and every night, I don't stop saying "I love you" until she echoes it with as much or preferably more passion. She, on the other hand, doesn't like explaining herself. She doesn't like talking about our problems. She doesn't share any of her secret pains and requests and suggestions and complaints.

When it comes to priorities, we're also very different. While she is the content employee who is loyal to her present employer who should be giving her a huge raise but is not (and she's not complaining!), I am the aggressive corporate ladder-climber who voluntarily and enthusiastically overworks, sweats lots for promotions and pay raises, with my eyes transfixed on financial success.

Her dream is to be a housewife, which is not bad (one of my dreams is to be a "houseband" or some male version of Martha Stewart and Rachel Ray combined), while mine is to rule the world.

This difference in priorities definitely creates even more conflicts between us. She hints on movie dates and resto dinners when I need to meet the deadliest deadlines. And during special occasions, I often have to attend meetings, go on coverage or out-of-town trips.

We even fight about money! She is a saint, a martyr and a good Samaritan all rolled into one. She'll give anyone anything and everything even if it means leaving nothing for herself, which is something I am totally against. My financial/material motto is to make sure you are always financially and materially successful so you can have something to give others. How can you help others if you don't have anything to give them, right? This is why I burn the midnight oil to make sure I have lots to give to others, and still have lots for me.

Another reason why I believe we should have parted ways years ago is that, pretty pictures of a good future together aside, I honestly think I'll give up sooner or later. Blame it on the fact that we always fight. Blame it on our personal differences. Blame it on the fact that we're incompatible according to our zodiac and Chinese zodiac signs. Blame it on the fact that we don't look like each other, which means we're not going to end up together.

Other reasons

Oh, and there are other major reasons.

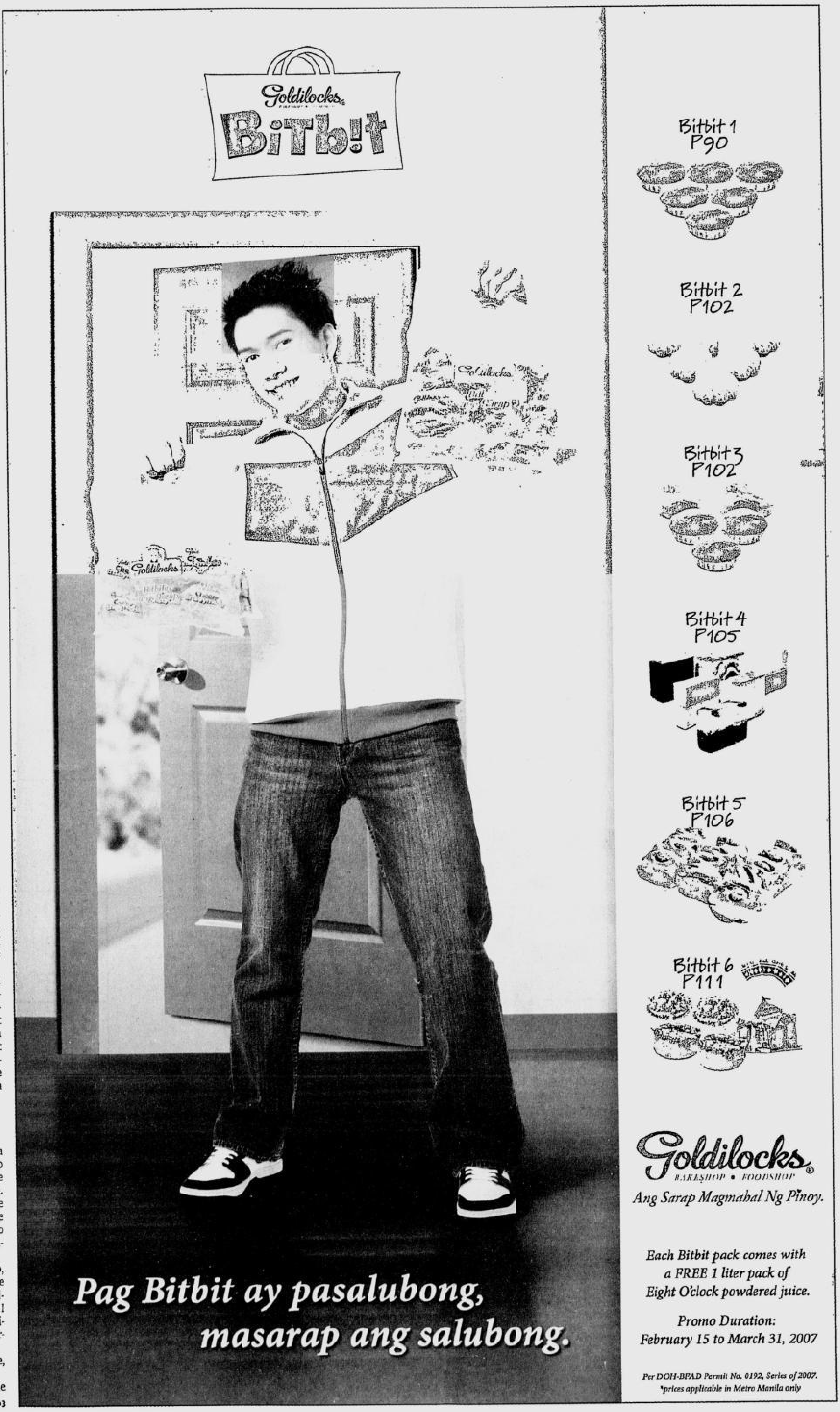
See, I am bisexual, though I've never had a boyfriend. You can't blame me for wanting to experience something like that. She, on the other hand, has never had a boyfriend but me. You can't blame her for wanting to experience another boyfriend—especially someone who's straight! Oh, and she's bisexual, too, so she kind of wants to experience having a girlfriend as well.

Also, because of my romantic relationship, I've had less time for my family and I've stopped making friends. I've even said goodbye to my books, magazines, CDs and DVDs! I find myself doing everything for her—sacrificing my own time, resources and energy—and not getting anything in return.

Of course, that can be just the insensitive, unfair, selfish me talking there.

There are moments when I miss my single

WHY IT'S/ D3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February 15 to March 31, 2007

Per DOH-BFAD Permit No. 0192, Series of 2007.
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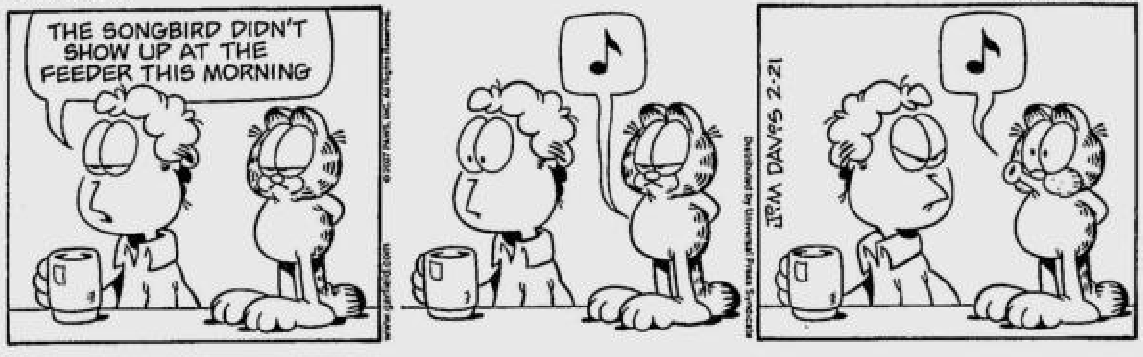
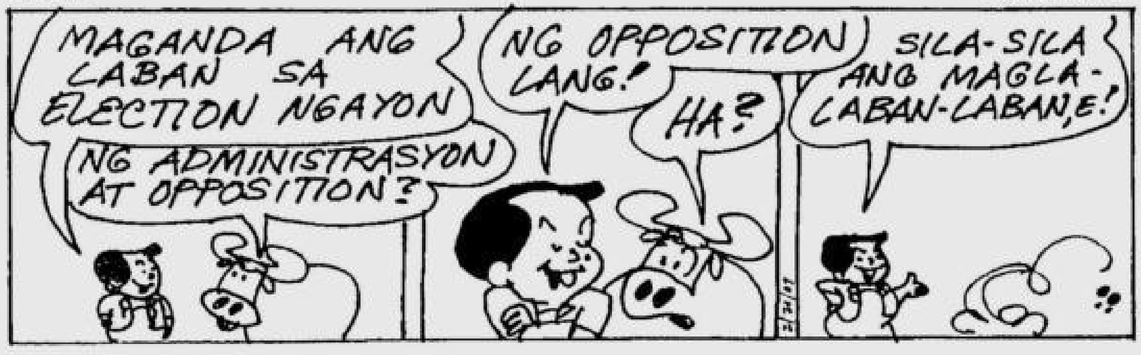
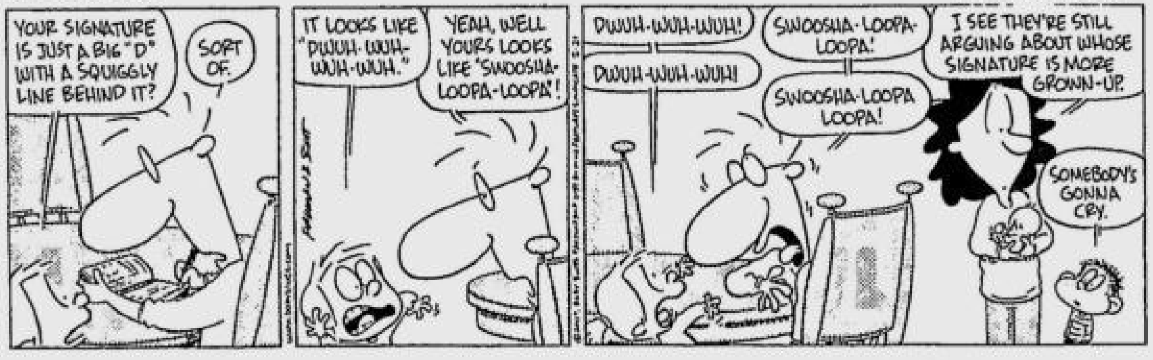
GARFIELD BY JIM DAVIS


THE SONGBIRD DIDN'T SHOW UP AT THE FEEDER THIS MORNING
♪
♪
JIM DAVIS 2-21

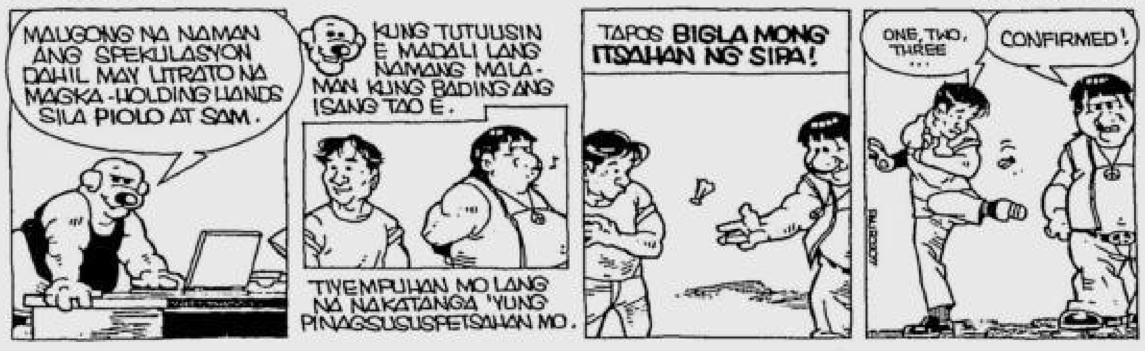
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


MAGANDA ANG LABAN SA ELECTION NGAYON
NG ADMINISTRASYON AT OPPOSITION?
NG OPPOSITION LANG!
HA?
SILA-SILA ANG MAGLA-LABAN-LABAN, E!

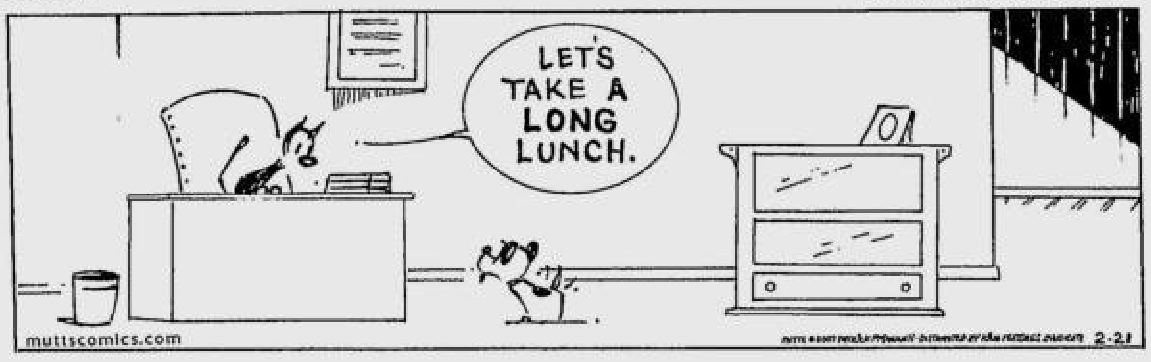
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


YOUR SIGNATURE IS JUST A BIG "D" WITH A SQUIGGLY LINE BEHIND IT?
SORT OF.
IT LOOKS LIKE "DWUH-WUH-WUH-WUH."
YEAH, WELL YOURS LOOKS LIKE "SWOOSHA-LOOPA-LOOPA"!
DWUH-WUH-WUH!
DWUH-WUH-WUH!
SWOOSHA-LOOPA-LOOPA!
SWOOSHA-LOOPA LOOPA!
I SEE THEY'RE STILL ARGUING ABOUT WHOSE SIGNATURE IS MORE GROWN-UP.
SOMEBODY'S GONNA CRY.

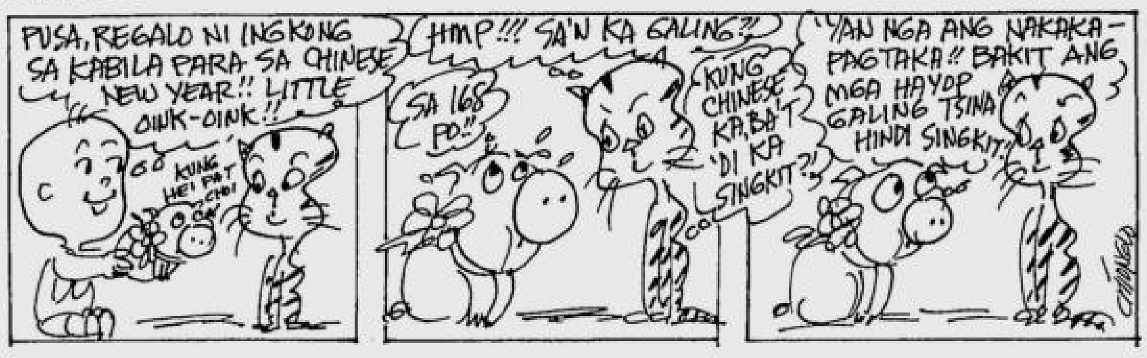
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAUGONG NA NAMAN ANG SPEKULASYON DAHIL MAY LITRATO NA MAGKA-HOLDING HANDS SILA PIOLO AT SAM.
KUNG TUTULUSIN E MADALI LANG NAMANG MALAMAN KUNG BADING ANG ISANG TAO E.
TIYEMPUHAN MO LANG NA NAKATANGA 'YUNG PINAGSUSUSPETSAHAN MO.
TAPOS BIGLA MONG ITSAHAN NG SIPA!
ONE, TWO, THREE ...
CONFIRMED!

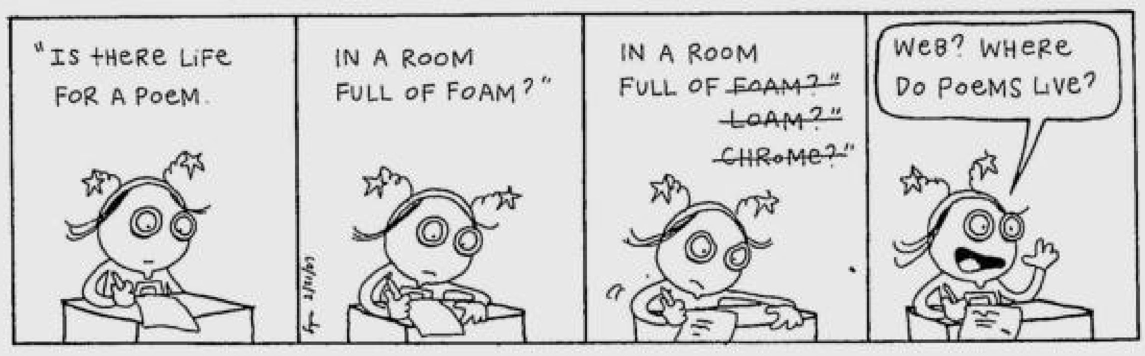
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


LET'S TAKE A LONG LUNCH.
muttscomics.com
2-21

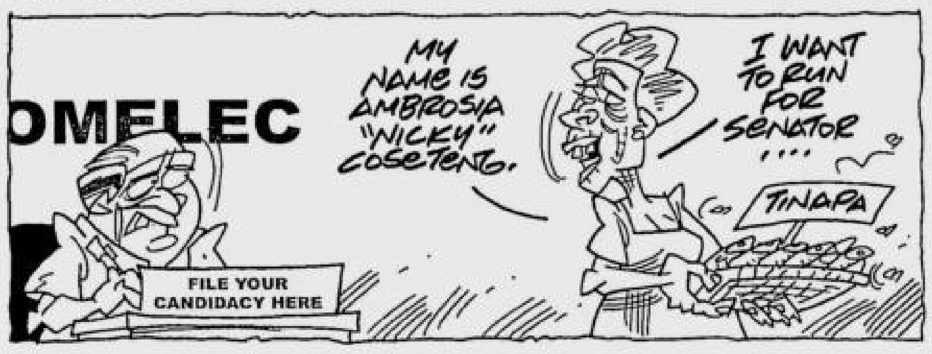
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


PUSA, REGALO NI INGKONG SA KABILA PARA SA CHINESE NEW YEAR!! LITTLE OINK-OINK!!
KUNG HEI FAT CHOI
HMP!!! SA'N KA GALING?!
SA 168 PO!!
KUNG CHINESE KA, BA'T 'DI KA SINGKIT?!
'YAN NGA ANG NAKAKAPAGTAKA!! BAKIT ANG MGA HAYOP GALING TSINA HINDI SINGKIT?!

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

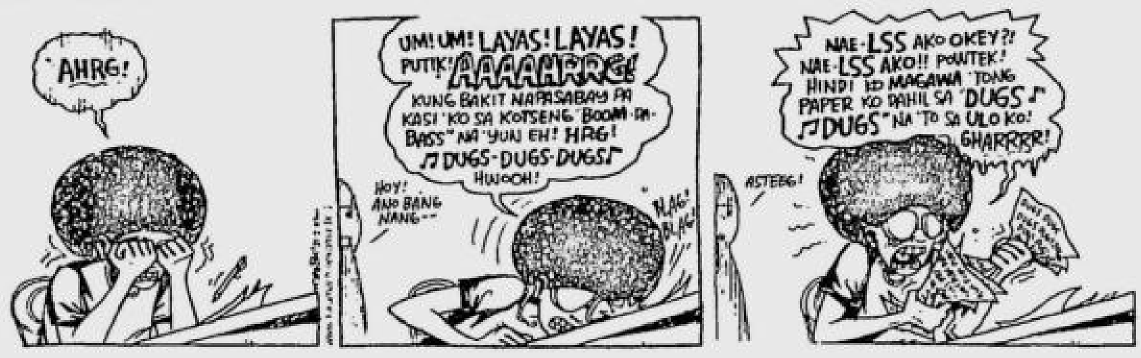

"IS THERE LIFE FOR A POEM.
IN A ROOM FULL OF FOAM?"
IN A ROOM FULL OF ~~FOAM?" LOAM?" CHROME?"~~
WEB? WHERE DO POEMS LIVE?

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

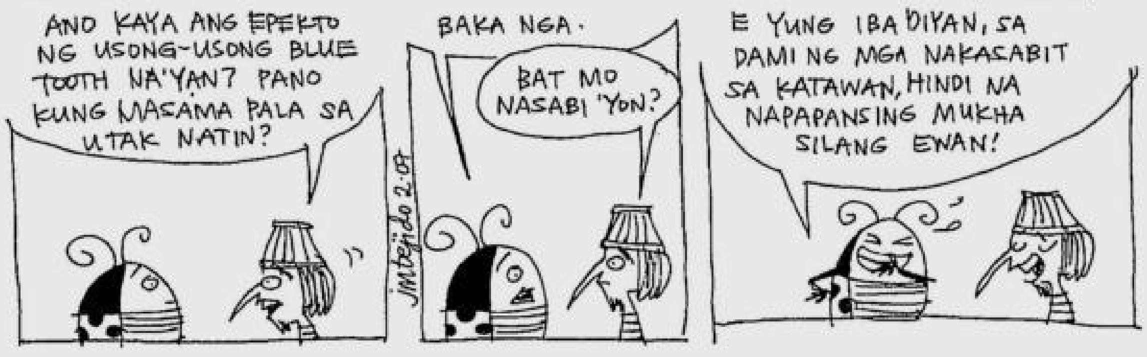

OMELEC
MY NAME IS AMBROSIA "NICKY" COSETENG.
I WANT TO RUN FOR SENATOR ....
TINAPA
FILE YOUR CANDIDACY HERE

TSK.....
MAY MGA
PWERSA NA
NAMAN
SA PILIPINAS
NA GUSTONG
LITUHIN ANG
MGA ELECTION
CANVASSERS

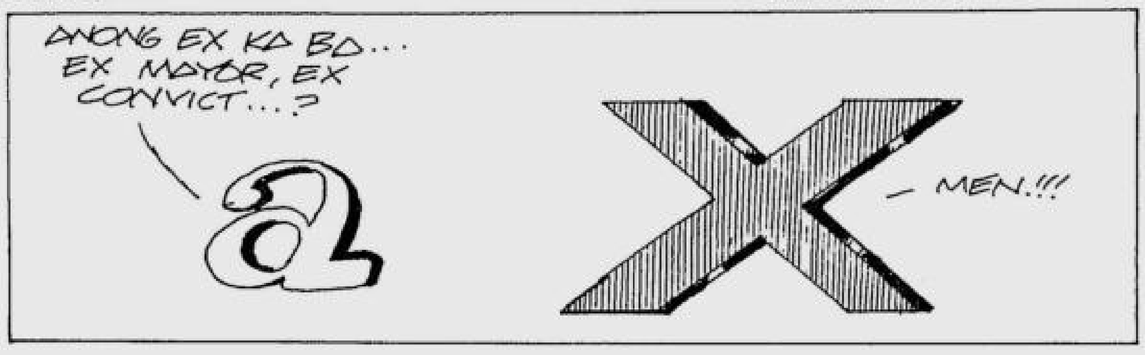
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


AHRG!
UM! UM! LAYAS! LAYAS! PUTIK! AAAAHRRG! KUNG BAKIT NAPASABAY PA KASI 'KO SA KOTSENG 'BOOM-DA-BASS' NA 'YUN EH! HRG! ♫DUGS-DUGS-DUGS!♫ HWOOH!
HOY! ANO BANG NANG--
BLAG! BLAG!
NAE-LSS AKO OKEY?! NAE-LSS AKO!! POWTEK! HINDI KO MAGAWA 'TONG PAPER KO DAHIL SA 'DUGS♫ ♫DUGS' NA 'TO SA ULO KO! GHARRRR!
ASTEEG!

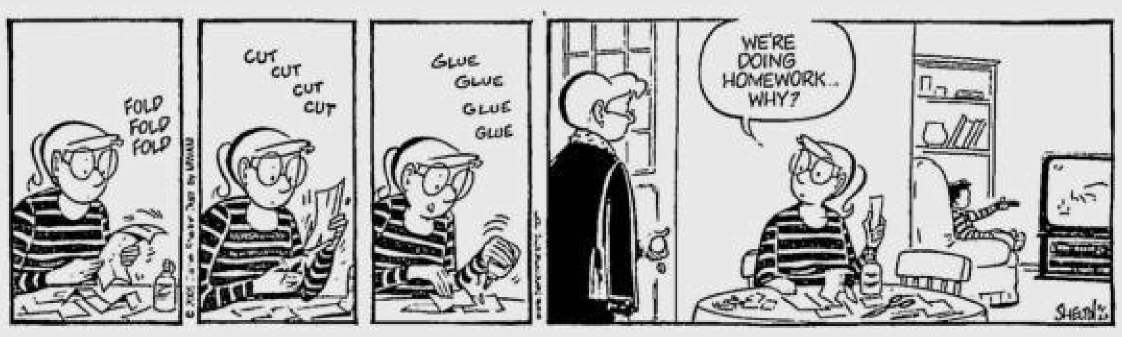
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANO KAYA ANG EPEKTO NG USONG-USONG BLUE TOOTH NA'YAN? PANO KUNG MASAMA PALA SA UTAK NATIN?
BAKA NGA.
BAT MO NASABI 'YON?
E YUNG IBA DIYAN, SA DAMI NG MGA NAKASABIT SA KATAWAN, HINDI NA NAPAPANSIN NG MUKHA SILANG EWAN!
jmtejido 2-07

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ANONG EX KA BA... EX MAYOR, EX CONVICT...?
a
X
- MEN.!!!

BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


FOLD FOLD FOLD
CUT CUT CUT CUT
GLUE GLUE GLUE GLUE
WE'RE DOING HOMEWORK... WHY?

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Inclined roadway
5 Gillette razor
9 Light haircuts
14 Zeno's home
15 Cafe au __
16 Bucolic
17 Actor Arkin
18 Choir voice
19 Hawaiian hello
20 Two codes
23 Spry
24 Loser to DDE
25 Colo. neighbor
26 Born in Nice
27 Basic commodity
31 Palindromic address
32 Unaided
33 Foot problems
34 Two codes
38 Horace and Thomas
39 Lawbreaking
40 Too
41 Mind one's manners
43 Peanut product
46 2100
47 Patriotic men's org.
48 Popeil company
50 Two codes
55 Disney's mermaid
56 Hawkeye State
57 Lyme-disease carrier
58 Put a tag on
59 Blue pencil
60 Supermodel Macpherson
61 Musher's conveyances
62 Loudness unit
63 Require

1	2	3	4	■	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12	13
14				■	15				■	16				
17				■	18				■	19				
20				21					22					
23					■	■	■	24			■	25		
26			■	27	28	29	30			■	31			
■	■	■	32					■	■	33				
■	34	35						36	37					■
38					■	■	39					■	■	■
40				■	41	42					■	43	44	45
46			■	47			■	■	■	48	49			
50			51				52	53	54					
55					■	56				■	57			
58					■	59				■	60			
61					■	62				■	63			

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
2/21/07

DOWN
1 40th President
2 Assert without proof
3 Unkind person
4 Group of jurors
5 Jai __
6 Soft mineral
7 Moreno or Rudner
8 Lacking a key
9 Golf course hazards
10 Govern
11 Blacksmith's products
12 School of Buddhism
13 Skier's courses
21 Flux density units
22 Ruby of "A Raisin in the Sun"
28 Craggy hill
29 Take your pick
30 Georgia fruit
31 Additional amount
32 AD word
33 Tourist's tote
34 Castle in Scotland
35 Write in a register
36 FDR Blue Eagle
37 Mil. unit
38 Milk-producing animals
41 Comment from the fold
42 Banks and Kovacs
43 In the records
44 Frozen hanging
45 Requiring a key
47 Offers on the market
49 Frequently
51 Ranked tournament player
52 Extinct giant bird
53 Castor or Pollux
54 Cost per unit

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

H	A	S	T	A	■	C	A	M	P	■	A	C	M	E
A	N	A	I	S	■	A	S	E	A	■	N	E	I	L
J	A	C	K	P	O	T	H	A	Y	S	K	I	D	S
■	■	K	I	C	K	S	■	N	A	T	A	L	I	E
E	M	B	■	A	R	I	A	■	B	A	R	I	■	■
D	A	I	S	■	A	T	V	■	L	L	A	N	O	S
I	L	G	W	U	■	T	E	H	E	E	■	G	T	O
S	I	T	E	S	■	E	N	O	■	S	U	S	H	I
O	B	I	■	H	A	R	U	M	■	T	A	P	E	R
N	U	M	B	E	R	■	E	E	S	■	W	O	R	E
■	■	E	A	R	L	■	S	A	D	E	■	T	S	E
M	U	R	K	I	E	R	■	L	A	L	A	W	■	■
G	R	O	U	N	D	B	O	O	K	S	B	A	L	L
M	E	A	L	■	G	I	A	N	■	A	I	L	E	D
T	A	D	A	■	E	S	S	E	■	S	E	L	E	S

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2/21/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have strong emotions, and you need to express them. You're self-aware, and personally, you constantly try to improve yourself. People respect you because you're direct, forthright and honest. You're very involved in your work. In the year ahead, some major changes could take place. (Perhaps as significant as whatever happened around 1998.)
Birthdate of: Nina Simone, singer; Charlotte Church, soprano; Alan Rickman, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): The next three weeks is the perfect time to shop for wardrobe items. Venus is now in Aries, and this makes you appreciate your appearance more than usual.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Solitude in beautiful surroundings will appeal to you now. Try to give yourself a little time just for you. Visit a park or go for a drive.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Friendships and flirtations will be quite enjoyable during the next month. You'll find it easy to be charming with others. This is also a good time to enter into partnerships and negotiations.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Because of a planetary shift today, you'll find it easier to deal with bosses, parents and VIPs during the next few weeks. (This will be the time to ask for that special something.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Travel for pleasure definitely will appeal to you in the next few weeks. Anything having to do with publishing, the media, education and study will flow quite easily.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Expect gifts, goodies and favors to come your way during the next few weeks. Don't worry about attached strings—just say "thank you"!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): With fair Venus across from your sign now, your charm and diplomacy are tops. This is the perfect time to patch up misunderstandings with partners and close friends.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Relations with coworkers will improve during the next few weeks. You might also be asked to give your input on design or artistic matters.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a fun-loving, social time for you. Enjoy playful activities with children. Enjoy theater, sports, parties and vacations. Yee haw!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might want to buy something beautiful for your home or a family member. You're in the mood to make where you live look more attractive now. (And why not? You have to live there.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It's a curious thing, but in the next few weeks, you'll notice just how much love there is in your daily life—all around you. This is a good thing.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your ability to boost your earnings is on the rise. A better job or a raise is very possible in the next few weeks. You're also spending money on beautiful things!

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

		6	9	3	5			
			4			7		
8		3					2	
6	9				8			3
	3						7	
2	8	4						5
3	5		2				9	
9				7	3	8		
			8	5				

Difficulty Level ★★★ 2/21

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	9	3	2	7	4	5	6	8
7	8	4	3	6	5	2	9	1
5	6	2	1	8	9	3	7	4
3	7	8	6	5	2	4	1	9
6	2	1	9	4	3	7	8	5
4	5	9	7	1	8	6	3	2
9	4	5	8	3	6	1	2	7
8	1	6	4	2	7	9	5	3
2	3	7	5	9	1	8	4	6

Difficulty Level ★★ 2/20

Why it's better not to break up

From page D1

life, and sometimes, I think to myself, did I make the right choice in choosing this life over my old one? Do I want the old one back?

Oh yes, I do! At least that's how I feel whenever we fight. Whenever we get into one of our daily dramas, thoughts of singlehood and non-exclusive dating make me break into a wistful smile. Whenever we hurl cusswords and furniture at each other, she suddenly becomes the ugliest soul I have ever met. Whenever we argue, I can't believe why I am still with her.

For some couples, six years is just a second. For us, it sometimes feels like eternity. I guess we've lost the spark already. I guess we need to feel that giddiness again that's common among teenagers, since we never really had that. I guess we need to go to a marriage counselor or someone like that. That, or break up so all the fighting can stop.

But while breaking up may seem the best way to go, I don't think I'm endorsing it, at least when it comes to our relationship. There may be a lot of reasons for us to break up, but I believe there are reasons, too—and better ones at that—why we should stick with each other.

The time we've spent as a couple plays a part in our wanting to stay together. I've invested a lot of emotions in this relationship, and I don't want that to go to waste. And I think I'm ancient now. I don't want to go look for someone who seems to be The One all over again.

Besides, I believe I've found The One already. It's just that we fight a lot and when one is in a very foul mood, the person can get irrational and emotional and unstable, to the point of immediately wanting a breakup.

One thing I've realized is that for some couples, the fighting will never stop. But this doesn't mean you need to break up every time, or that you don't love each other anymore. It simply means you don't agree on some things and that maybe you never will.

My girlfriend and I fight and fight and fight every single day, and it's getting tiring so we just try to resolve it any way we can. If talking about it (my style) doesn't solve things and instead leads to more fighting, then I guess we just have to ignore one another and sleep on it (her style), until we wake up completely free of the whole thing in the morning.

More than anything else, I don't want to end things with her because I still love her—madly, passionately, excessively, unconditionally. She is still the one I want to marry and build a weird family with. She is the only one I want to spend every day and night with, even with all the fights, cusswords, furniture-hurling plus bouts of jealousy and immaturity.

She is still the one—the only one—I want to be with to my very last days. I guess those are enough reasons for us not to call it quits.

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com

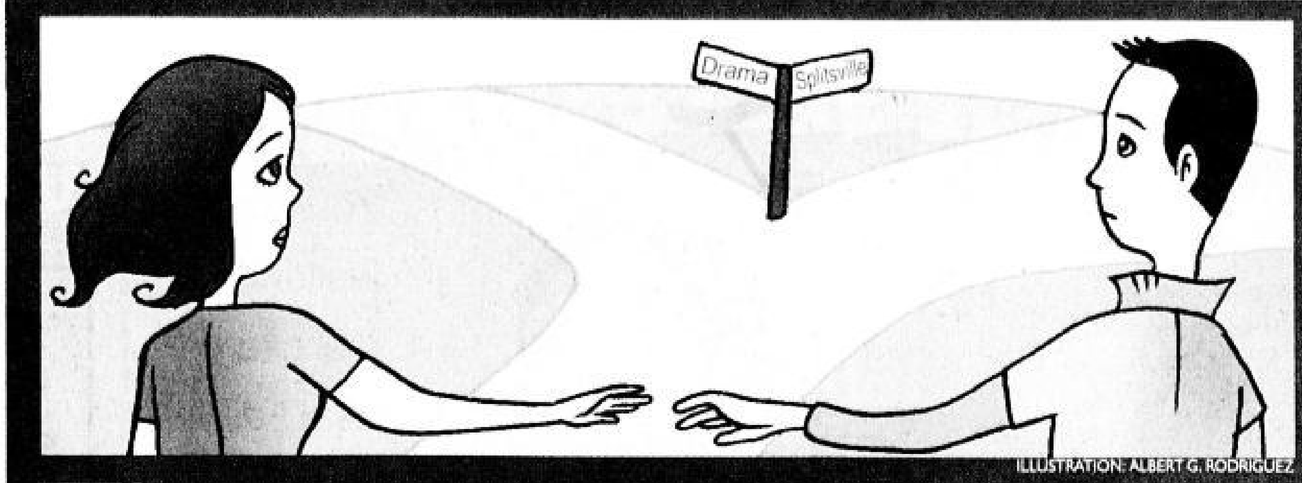


ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Let him or her be the first to know. There's nothing more painful than finding out from someone else

Time to say goodbye

By Katrina Yap
2bU! Correspondent

NOT EVERYONE LOOKS FORWARD TO the Valentine's season. After all, the world isn't just made up of happy couples.

Lucky for me, I've had the same boyfriend since high school. To me, breaking up is not just a concept I haven't been able to grasp, it's also something I'm afraid of.

When friends' relationships turn sour, they do run to me for a sympathetic ear. But not so much for advice, and for a very good reason. What wise words could I possibly offer?

And so, this article was written with the help of friends who've gone through those rough times of having to say goodbye—some just once, others more than my fingers can count. Thanks to them for allowing me to get a glimpse of what breakups are like, and for sharing experiences some of them (I know) would rather forget.

So how do you know it's time to end the relationship?

1. You remember the bad memories more than the good ones.

This is one of the best responses I've gotten from a guy friend of mine. Sure, there'll be good times and bad times. But a healthy relationship should uplift both your spirits and leave you good memories. Which brings me to No. 2.

2. You're unhappy. Or your partner is unhappy.

It's a no-brainer. But when you really have the time, think about it, and think hard. Ask, are you in the relationship because of sheer convenience (because it's there)? Is being together weighing you or your partner down? Is the relationship self-serving? Does it restrict your or your partner's growth as individuals?

Jerry Maguire's classic line "You complete me" really sounds romantic, but I strongly believe it's flawed. You need to be complete, mature individuals who choose to enter a relationship. You're not supposed to be in one so you can have someone fill in the empty aspects of your life (Remember biology? Do symbiosis and parasitism ring a bell?).

There's some irony in there, however, because healthy relationships do nurture both individuals plus their bond.

As I've found out (and experienced myself), if you're young and have a boyfriend/girlfriend, it's tough to maintain a relationship because you're still growing and learning things about yourself. You're blessed if your partner understands the situation and is willing to grow with you, too.

Then again, there are people who don't really mature even though they're way past their teenage years. I'm guessing these people have it worse.

3. There's no compromise.

Going back to the biology bit, it's really a two-way street when it comes to relationships (cliché, I know). If you can't find a middle ground and one side always "wins," then expect your life together to be, well, a living hell.

4. Communication's dead.

Say you and your boyfriend (or girlfriend) had a fight. And you're wondering whether you'll get back together. But nobody's talking about your predicament or apologizing (either for the cause of the fight, or for hurt feelings). Or maybe you try to reach out but after having given your partner "time" and having had a "cool-off," you're not getting any response.

A friend of mine says this could possibly mean loss of interest in resolving the issue (a variation of this would be vague and shorter replies to your text messages). This could be a painful goodbye. Friends have also told me you would need to confront this person eventually, at some point, for real closure.

5. You can't accept your partner for who he or she is.

Everybody wants to have the perfect partner. But since no one's perfect, it's not possible to find someone who'd fit the bill seamlessly. Some people think they can deal with the little (or big) kinks in their relationship, thinking that maybe the person can change and all will be better. But what happens when the person doesn't and stays the same? Will you desperately wait for the day that the wart-filled frog turns into a prince with your magical kiss?

A good girlfriend says: If you're constantly trying to transform your guy to become a "better man for you," it would be wiser to let him be, and go look for that "better man" because your guy's clearly not good enough for you (or so you think).

6. You've hit a dead end and there's no future in sight.

You know you're having it bad when you begin asking yourself why you're still in the relationship. Having to rationalize is a bad sign. And if you don't see him or her in your future, it's pointless to go on as a couple, since you'd be mean to lead him or her on. Unless, of course, the relationship is not exclusive and non-committal, which is an altogether different story.

Once you've decided to call it quits, just don't forget the following:

- Let him or her be the first to know. There's nothing more painful than finding out from someone else.
- Do it in person. Breaking up over the phone/text message/e-mail is harsh. Doing the vanishing act is worse.
- Accept that the breakup will be painful. Allow yourself to cry, and know that you're hurt.
- Don't hurt other people (and yourself) while you recover from heartbreak. This means no rebound dates or one-night stands.

E-mail the author at trina@pldtdsl.net.

What's the best way to recover from a breakup?

Text and photos by Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

REVENGE IS THE WAY, seriously. Get a boy toy. No, really, acceptance is the key. Just accept that you were never really meant to be and then move on. Ethel Timbol used to tell me that no man is worth more than two tears, one on the left and one on the right.—**Maan Ilustre**

Reflect on your mistakes and learn from them. And then, pamper yourself. Make yourself a better person.—**Bernadette, 26**

Avoid everything that reminds you of him.—**Sherry Yu, 24, who is reminded of The One when she sees Mr. Chips**

As much as possible, be with your close friends (or those you can trust). Invite them out, shop, even sing songs over the videoke so you will feel better. Making yourself busy with something will be a good diversion as well.—**Prudence, 20**

Overhaul your entire wardrobe!—**Pao Jamisola, 23, overhauled his entire wardrobe last 2005**

Find a better replacement and move on.—**Emiliana, 18, broke up with her boyfriend and has found a better replacement**

Go snow-skiing because it will clear your mind.—**Gregorio, 22, doesn't need to go snow-skiing anytime soon**

Find another person to love, and make your ex see that you can still continue your life even without him.—**Raqui, 24**

Good diet and a lot of exercise. Looking radiantly beautiful and feeling fit after a breakup are the best ways of saying "too bad, you let me go," plus you gain back your self-confidence to move on.—**Marjorie Ocay Foley, 25**

Party all night.—**James, 21**

Look for an outlet: new crush, hobby, gimmick, friends and think of all the bad memories you had with your ex, so that instead of missing him/her, you would rather forget that no-good @#$%^&*! That'll help.—**Cathy Caringal, 27**

Find yourself—again. When you're with someone, you tend to lose some of your identity. At least by being single, you get to rediscover who you are. Hold on to this. The next time you find yourself liking, or better yet, falling for someone, try to integrate yourself into the relationship.—**Lara Tarranco, 23**

I'll go on a road trip for few days, maybe go to the mountains of Baguio or the beaches of Mindoro to reflect and heal myself. Nature helps to heal sometimes!—**Paowie Pilapil, 27**

Use your time to re-identify and reshape yourself.—**Anna, 21**

Find another one. No, find yourself first!—**Dinjo Constantino, 28**

Reinvent yourself to regain the self-importance that you may have lost—from a change in wardrobe to having a new perception in life. Self-evolution is a good start.—**Koi, 23**

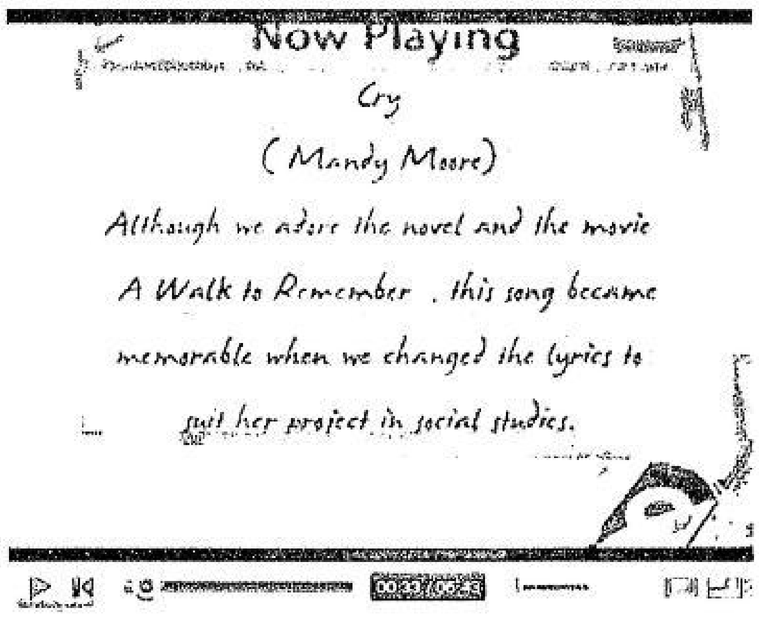
The best way would be to distract yourself big time. Go out with friends. Go on DVD marathons. Organize stuff in your closet, bedroom, collections, etc. And most importantly, go shopping!—**Revekka Tatum, 25, single but not looking**

I would totally disassociate my self with the routine that surrounded my previous relationship. I'd stay away from the cafés and restaurants that we used to go to when we were still together. I'd also try new things like taking up a new sport or getting graduate studies—anything just to keep me busy. Best of all, I'd make sure that I look absolutely ravishing and fabulous when I go out, so when he sees me again, he'll be sorry he let this stunner go!—**Carla, 25**

Hmm... Throw a party! Who knows, you might hook up with someone.—**Paeng, 21**

Go out with friends... with benefits.—**Chase Mendoza, 20**

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com



Now Playing

Cry

(Mandy Moore)

Although we adore the novel and the movie A Walk to Remember, this song became memorable when we changed the lyrics to suit her project in social studies.

They've won iPods!

ONCE AGAIN, OUR INBOX WAS flooded with entries from creative 2bU! readers who wanted to win sexy silver two-gig iPod Nanos for their loved ones.

We loved going through your entries—seeing the faces and the tunes of so many happy couples was fun and uplifting—even if not all of us had dates for Valentine's Day. (Sob! Kidding!)

We seriously wish we can give iPods to all of you (if we were Oprah, we would) but we promise this isn't the last time we will be giving away iPods.

Our two winners this week are very deserving.

First is 26-year-old Jayson Guzman from Orion, Bataan, sent in a five-minute private YouTube video that he obviously worked hard on. We hope he had as much fun making it as we did watching it.

Twenty-two-year-old Gino Montalvo from Ateneo de Manila/Big Top, Inc. sent us his playlist, along with a fantastic artwork that was inspired by the songs he and his girlfriend love.

Their song list included "Stellar" by Incubus, "Balisong" by Rivermaya; "Here Comes the Sun," "Across the Universe" and "Strawberry Fields Forever" by the Beatles; "No Such Thing" by John Mayer; "This is the Song That Doesn't End" from Lamb Chops Play-Along; "Happy Happy Joy Joy" by Ren and Stimpy; "I Wanna Love You Girl" by Robin Thicke featuring Pharell; and "Angelica" by Lamb.

Congratulations, Jayson and Gino! We will contact you (and the winners from last week) on how you can claim your iPods.

It's over and it's okay

By Arlene Paredes
2bU! Correspondent

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

You can wallow over a broken heart all your life. Or, you can just begin to live with the fact that your relationship may be over, but your life is not

CLOSURE CAN MEAN A lot of things in Philosophy and Math. But as far as romance is concerned, closure is the right word for the complete conclusion of a relationship.

It is that distinct sense of freedom from all the grudges, bitterness and resentments that a bad breakup may have brought. Closure is also freedom from wishful thinking, false hopes and incessant novenas for the loved one to come back. Simply put, when you've found closure, it means you know it's over, and it's just okay that way.

The question is: When do you say "It's over and it's just okay?"

A normal person won't be happy to end a relationship that's been a part of his/her life, especially if the relationship has lasted for a significant length of time. Still, it does not mean that no normal person would end a relationship. In fact, a mentally sound person would know when a relationship should come to an end.

Following are some of the possible scenarios that can lead to a breakup (not in any order): lack of common interests, infidelity, boredom, pride, selfishness, arrogance, insensitivity, the presence of a third party, etc. Some relationships overcome, some try to overcome; but not every relationship can overcome these issues.

Let's face it: Everybody wants something more—especially if he or she ends up with people who are used to giving much less than what they can actually give.

Once the stage of being so blindly in love is over and all the romantic issues are exposed, it becomes increasingly more difficult to stay, especially when things just get worse day by day. (Sometimes, they don't really get worse; they just become more obvious.)

Then once the limit for overcoming is met, the breakup happens. If you've been around, or have friends who have been around, you'll know for sure that breakups never just happen. A breakup is always the end result of a series of unpleasant events. Falling out of love is merely one of these unpleasant occurrences.

In an ideal breakup, one partner says it's over, and the other agrees and even feels relieved that the breakup need not come from him/her, or that finally, the breakup happened before the relationship got any deeper or more serious.

Annie Reed's (Meg Ryan) breakup with her fiancé in "Sleepless in Seattle" is a classic example of a clean, smooth and ideal breakup. Minutes after breaking up with the guy she can't afford to marry, she's with Sam Baldwin (Tom Hanks) and they are free to start a new relationship without fear of being stalked, threatened, humiliated or cursed.

We all wish every breakup is like that. But not everyone finds closure fast and easy, especially when there are no Sam Baldwins or Annie Reeds meeting on top of the Empire State Building. Enough about the movies! In real life, closure does not come easily to everyone. This is because not everyone understands why breakups need to happen.

In a funny way, even with a list of a thousand reasons for a breakup, the other party would still think that the issues could be worked out. This is tricky, because once you hear of a reason leading to a breakup, it should be quite evident that your loved one is unhappy with you. And once you start coming up with a rebuttal, it only means you're making an argument, not to save the relationship, but to prove that you're right.

On the one hand, it's good to "fight" for your love. On the other hand, what would you be fighting for if the other person has decided to move on? Where is the "love" in that person?

Different marks

I've seen people who found it hard to let go because they thought the reasons given to them were lame and irrational. They try to argue back, without realizing that the reasons were only lame and irrational to them because they're looking at their relationship in different ways. They're not on the same page. They're going on different directions. They're not aiming for the same marks. Therefore, it does not make sense for them to continue on a journey together.

Who is "the third party?" This androgynous character is so notorious for breaking up a lot of relationships. Poor Third Party, even when you're not the real reason, others would still put the blame on you, not getting that you won't be in the scene without much help from the first or second party.

People just give you too much credit because you're easier to blame. In "My Best Friend's Wedding," Julianne Potter (Julia Roberts) couldn't let go of Michael O'Neal (Dermot Mulroney) who was getting married to someone he just met. So with much conviction, she told her gay friend George (Rupert Everett), "I can make him happier than her." To which George replied, "Is this about winning?"

Unfortunately, it is so easy to forget that love is not about winning, or comparing yourself to anyone whom your love interest has chosen to marry. Love is always about giving and setting free.

You can wallow over a broken heart all your life. Or, you can just begin to live with the fact that your relationship may be over, but your life is not, and at the rate the population is increasing on this planet, there's a good chance you'll meet someone new and begin a new relationship.

Form your own closure by accepting that it's over and love is not about winning. It's always about the journey.

Again, question: When do you say that "It's over and it's just okay?"

Answer: Whenever you're willing and ready. (Keep saying you're not, and you never will be.)

CELEBRITY SURVEY

What's your most memorable breakup?

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

WE MAY LOOK AT THEM AS PERfect sometimes, but really, celebrities are so normal—especially when it comes to love and relationships.

They get all giddy, too, over the smallest and simplest gestures. They make the biggest sacrifices and the stupidest mistakes. And they get into bad breakups as well, as this survey shows.

My most memorable breakup was 4 years ago. I had to end it because my ex used to hurt me physically, and the day we broke up he pushed me down the stairs. It was horrible—it was, like, 15 steps. I broke my wrist! **–Aubrey Miles**

For me, every breakup hurts and I don't want to carry that baggage. I live for the moment.
–Phoemela Barranda

I had a girlfriend before and we were supposed to meet at a concert, but I saw her with another guy. We talked about it, and we decided to split. **–Jay-R Siaboc of "Pinoy Dream Academy"**

It was years ago. I was dating this girl. We were never together but we were "us," but we had no label. Then she went abroad. She just left. It took me almost five months to recover. **–Luke Jickain**

All of them are forgettable, sorry. I lack drama in my life. **–Lyn Ching**

Unfortunately, nothing comes to mind because all my breakups are good. No drama or dirty stuff. **–Issa Litton**

Most memorable breakup: my first boyfriend. He got mad at me so I did not speak to him again. I started dating again. One month later he called and asked if I was sorry for the fight. All along I had thought we had broken up already. But he was still waiting. He went psycho. So I learned that there must be closure in a failed relationship. **–Daphne Oseña**

I don't really have a memorable breakup. I guess there's nothing about it that's worth remembering. **–JM Rodriguez**

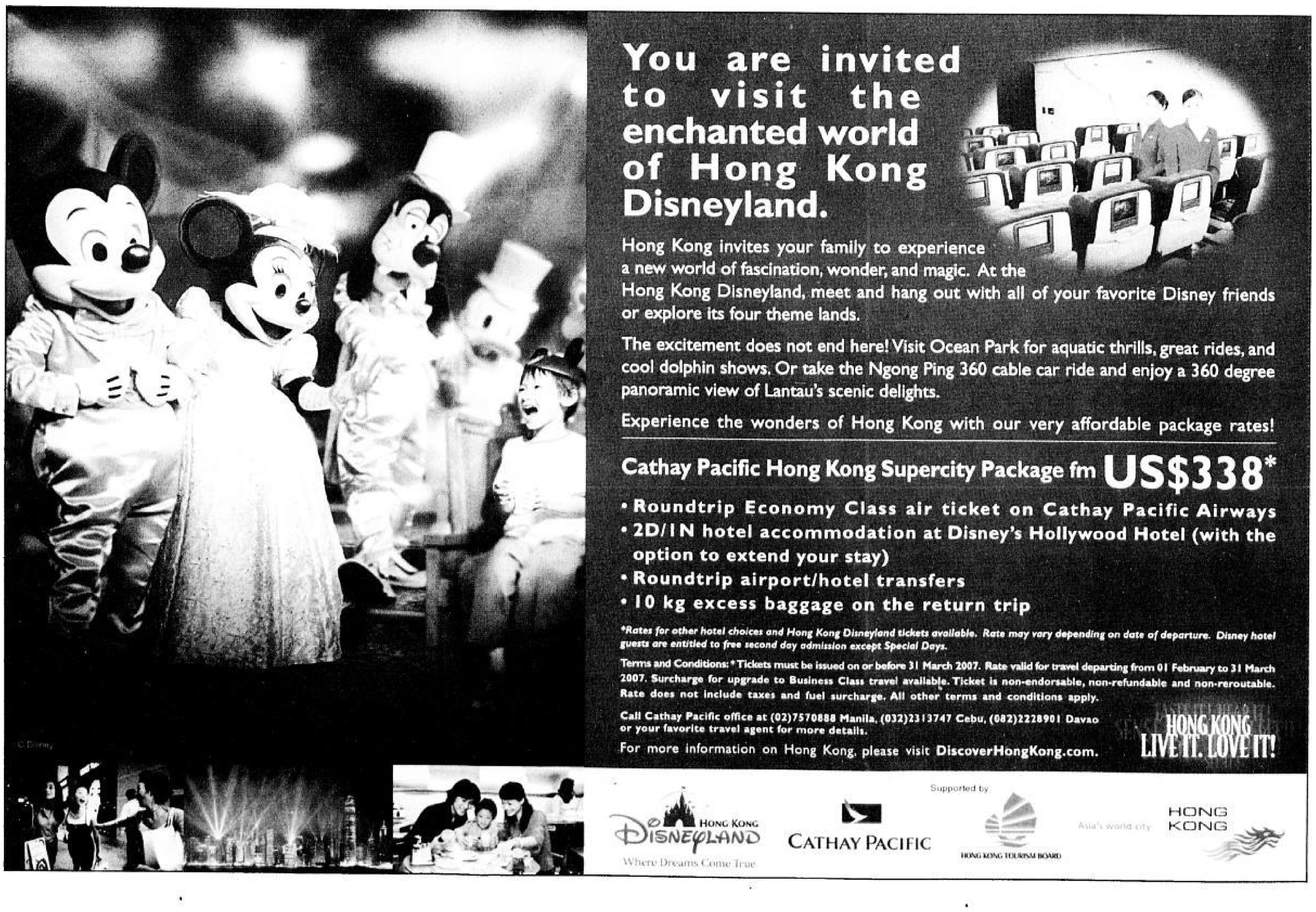
Every breakup is memorable just because it's painful. But there's this one breakup where we broke up not because we didn't love each other anymore but because it was the fairest thing to do. That's why true love for me is selflessness. **–John Estrada**

I'm sorry, I haven't experienced a breakup yet. I've only had one boyfriend who is now my hubby. **–Arnee Hidalgo**

I've only had two real boyfriends, Paco and KC. I broke up with Paco and, at the time, it was really hard for me because we were married, with a 3-year-old son. I just woke up one morning and told him that we should already separate and he said okay and moved out of the house. The love between us was still there, but the respect we used to have for each other had already disappeared even before we parted ways. I had a song in my album called "Last Goodbye"—"I think it's over, it's the end of the line, but it doesn't seem right, me without you, struggling right here without you... on that perfect night when all the stars were bright, we kissed, we hugged and then we said our last goodbye."

–Geneva Cruz

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bu@yahoo.com



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AURAEUS Solito, above, Desiree del Valle and Vanna Garcia, right, in "Tuli"

RP's 'Tuli' cited by Asian critics

YU NAN in the movie "Tuya's Marriage" AFP

China's 'Tuya's Marriage' tops Berlin film fest

BERLIN—DIRECTOR WANG Quan'an's "Tuya's Marriage," which follows the troubles of a young shepherdess in fast-changing rural China, won the top Golden Bear award at the annual Berlin film festival.

"Tuya's Marriage" was chosen from among 22 competitors at the festival by a seven-member jury led by "Taxi Driver" screenwriter Paul Schrader.

"A very beautiful dream has become reality for me here," director Wang said after receiving the Golden Bear statuette on Saturday. He said he believed the award "will bring good fortune to Chinese cinema."

The movie stars Yu Nan as Tuya, a herdswoman on the steppe of Inner Mongolia trying to resist pressure to leave her pastures and move to the city as China's industry expands.

She and her handicapped husband, Bater, decide to get divorced after she falls ill, and Tuya seeks a respectable new husband who can look after Bater and her two children. An old classmate appears to fill that role, and he persuades Tuya and the children to move to town.

"You see in the film how things disappear—cultural things as well—through this rapid economic expansion," Wang, speaking through an interpreter, said at a news conference.

"Tuli (The Circumciser)," Filipino director Auraeus Solito's coming-of-age story of a young woman growing up in an isolated Philippine community, won the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (Netpac) Prize. It stars Desiree del Valle, Carlo Aquino, Vanna Garcia, Bembol Roco, Luis Alandy and Eugene Domingo.

The film shared the prize with Japan's "Faces of a Fig Tree," Momoi Kaori's film about farewells, resolutions and fading memories.

Netpac is an alliance of festival organizers and film critics who "aim to support Asian films." This year's three-member jury was composed of Budi Irawanto (president), Intishal al Timimi and Yang Yong-hi.

The jury commended Solito's "ability [to handle] bold subjects. [It's] a lyrical weave of a story well-told, [with] beautiful images and very good acting."

The Best Actor award went to Argentina's Julio Chavez for his role in director Ariel Rotter's "El Otro (The Other)" as Juan, a man who decides to take on a new identity amid a crisis triggered by his wife's pregnancy and his father's illness.

Best Actress was Germany's Nina Hoss for her role in "Yella," directed by Christian Petzold. Hoss plays the heroine of the film's title, a young woman who quits her job and broken marriage and moves from eastern Germany to the west, and is increasingly haunted by voices and sounds from the past.

US-born Israeli director Joseph Cedar won the Best Director award for "Beaufort," depicting the fear and futility felt by soldiers guarding a famed military outpost in southern Lebanon just before Israel's withdrawal from that country in 2000.

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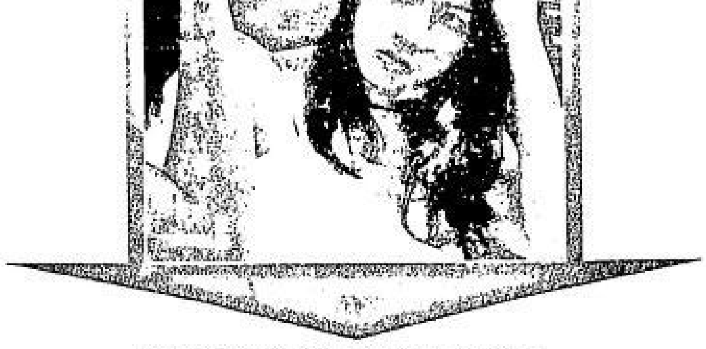

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12 GHOST RIDER

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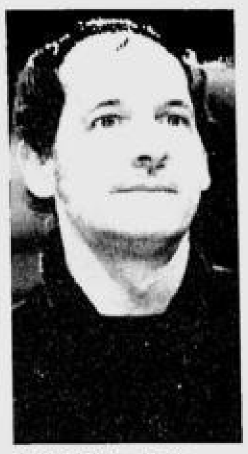
*FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

BEST Film winner Wang Quan'an AFP

BEST Actress Nina Hoss AP



BEST Actor Julio Chavez AP

BEST Director Joseph Cedar REUTERS

China's 'Tuya's...'

From page E1

"It seems pretty obvious that we're against war and that war is horrible. Hopefully there's something in my film that gives insight into a more specific nature of how absurd combat ... is," Cedar said.

The Berlinale's top prize has often gone to less heralded productions such as "Tuya's Marriage," which was one of two Chinese entries at this year's festival.

Last year's Golden Bear went to "Grbavica," a film by Jasmila Zbanic on the aftermath of the Bosnian war.

On Saturday, the cast of Robert De Niro's "The Good Shepherd"—which traces the origins of the CIA through the eyes of one of its earliest agents, played by Matt Damon—won the festival's award for an outstanding Artistic Contribution, but the movie missed out on the top prizes.

Other US entries—including Steven Soderbergh's "The Good German" and Gregory Nava's "Bordertown," starring Jennifer Lopez—came away empty-handed. So did a strong contingent of four films by French directors—including Olivier Dahan's "La Vie en Rose" and Francois Ozon's English-language "Angel."

The award for Best Music went to Scottish director David Mackenzie for "Hallam Foe." South Korean director Park Chan-wook's "I'm a Cyborg, But That's OK" was honored as a work of particular innovation.

The Berlin festival, in its 57th edition this year, opened on Feb. 8 and ended Sunday. *AP*

SHANG CINEPLEX

① **BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA** SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING 12:20,.2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00	③ **EPIC MOVIE** MTRCB: R-13 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
② **GHOST RIDER** MTRCB PG-13 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00	④ **THE NUMBER 23** SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE — **MUSIC AND LYRICS** MTRCB PG-13

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- Tony Medley, Tolucan Times

hugh grant drew barrymore
music and lyrics

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- Peter Debruge, PREMIERE MAGAZINE

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- Stephen Rebello, PLAYBOY MAGAZINE

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- Mel Caylo, WIZARD MAGAZINE

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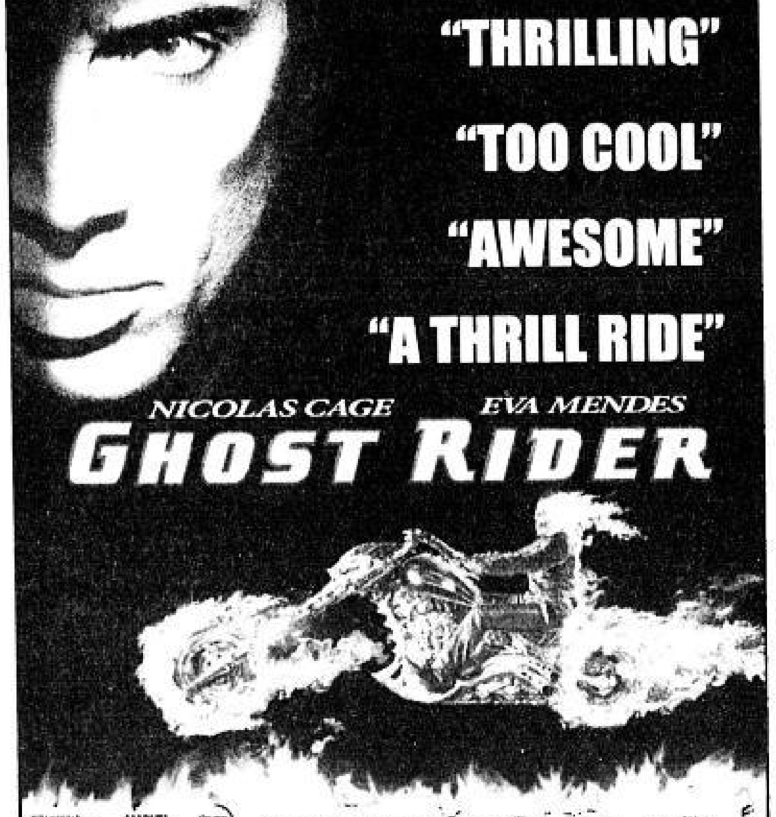

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1	EPIC MOVIE 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 R13
2	GHOST RIDER 12:20, 2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:05 PG 13
3	THE NUMBER 23 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00
4	BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA 1:20 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 PG 13

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AT THE CINEMAS

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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 NUMBER 23	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 THX GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 FACES OF LOVE	5 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA	6 EPIC MOVIE	7 THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 EPIC MOVIE	2 NUMBER 23		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX EPIC MOVIE GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NUMBER 23 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND GUARANTEED SEATS	4 MUSIC & LYRICS GUARANTEED SEATS	5 GHOST RIDER GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NUMBER 23 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA		
	3 EPIC MOVIE	4 MUSIC & LYRICS	5 GHOST RIDER	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 GHOST RIDER	2 MUSIC & LYRICS	3 CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER	4 BLOOD & CHOCOLATE
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE PROMISE	2 BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA		
	3 EPIC MOVIE	4 GHOST RIDER	5 NUMBER 23	

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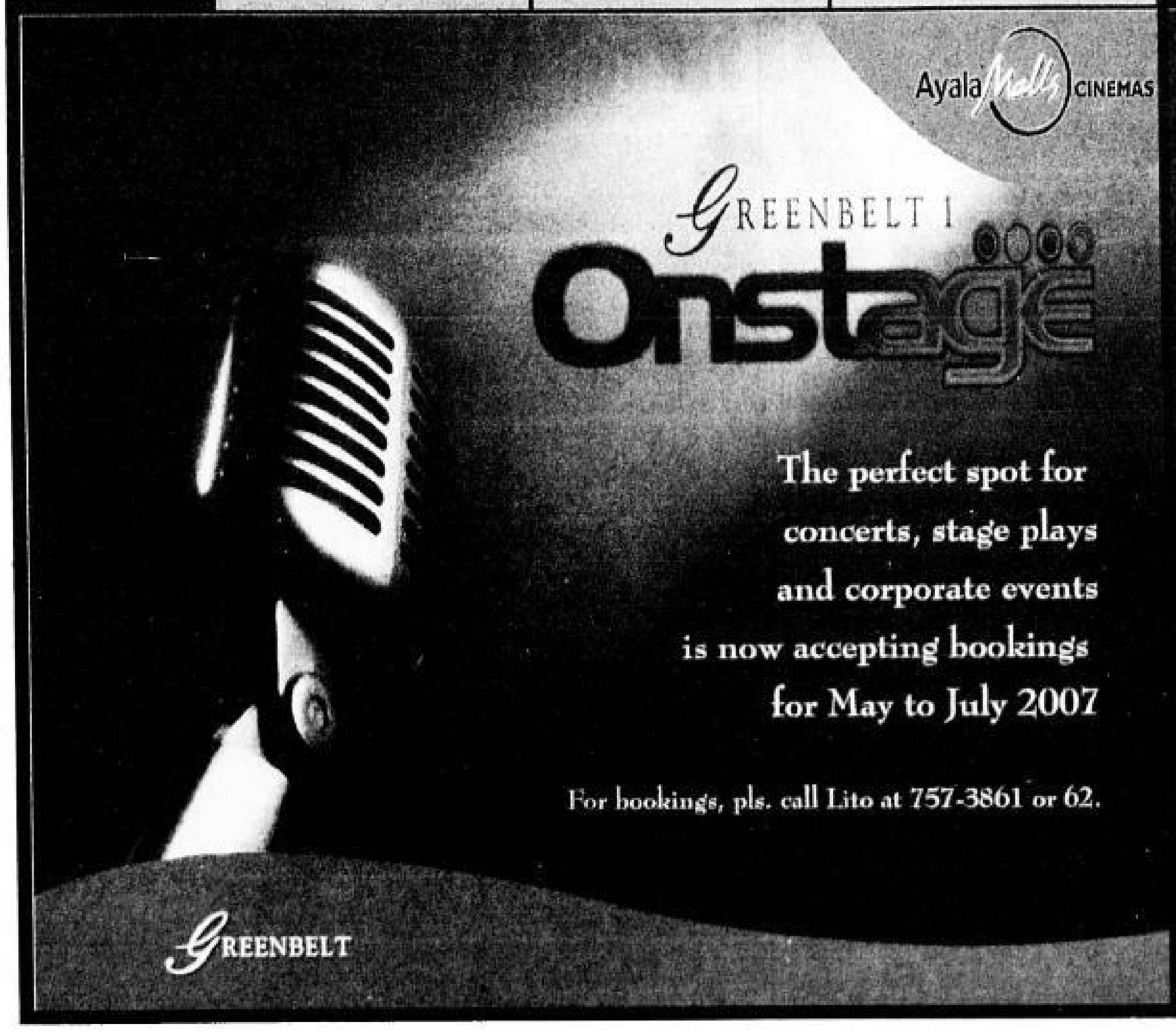

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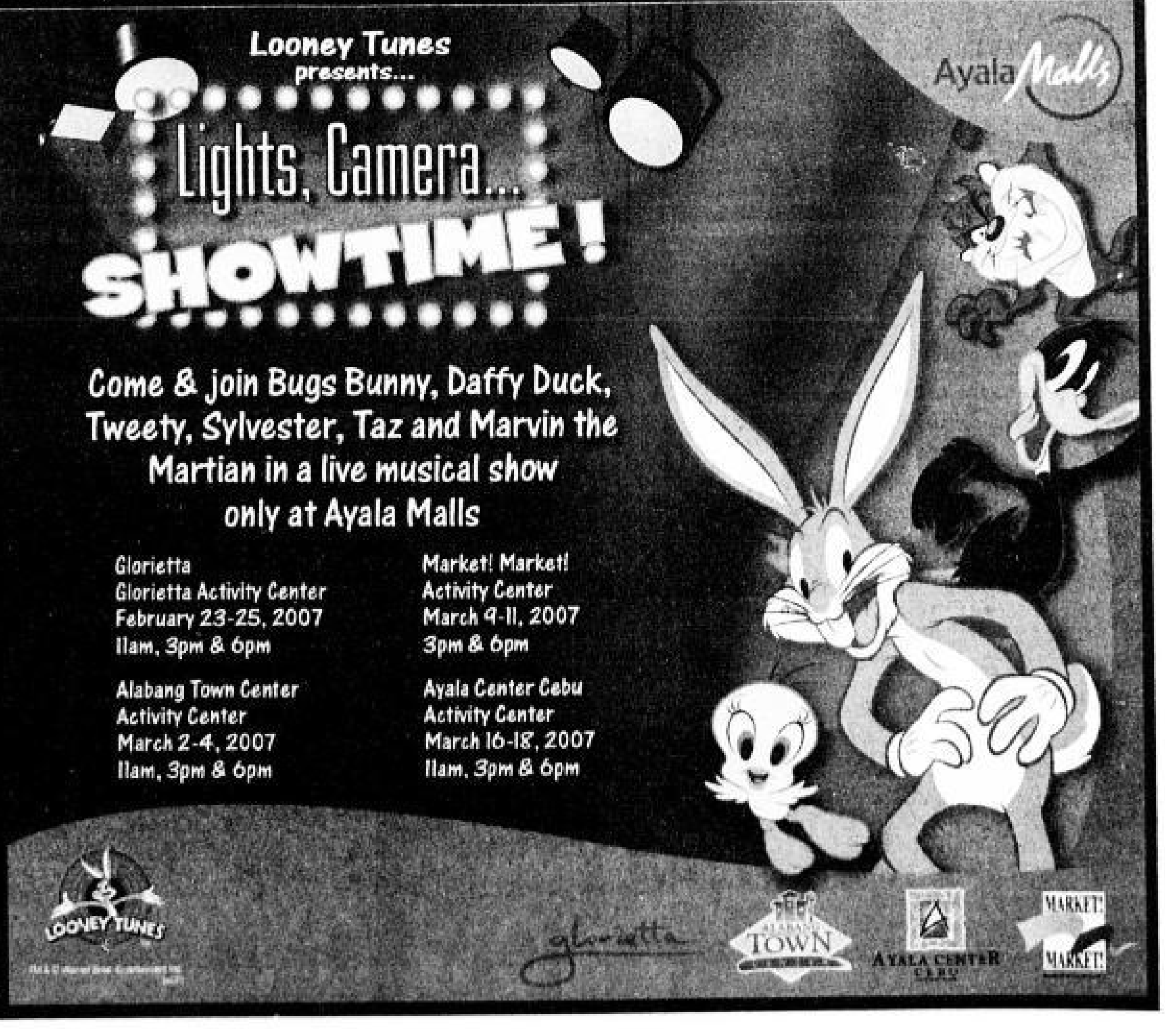

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2 (DOLBY)	GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY)	EPIC MOVIE
4 (DOLBY)	THE NUMBER 23

PREMIERE

(DOLBY)	MUSIC AND LYRICS

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Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
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1	GHOST RIDER
2	MUSIC & LYRICS
3	THE PROMISE
4	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER

starmall EDSA SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150

3	GHOST RIDER
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	THE PROMISE
5	TROIKA

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504265, 5433994

1	THE PROMISE
2	TROIKA
3	GHOST RIDER
4	APOCALYPTO

THEATRES
Pacific Mall Cabanatuan
Telephone No. (044) 600 3025

1	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3	THE PROMISE

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-6271

1	THE PROMISE
2	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3	RESRVED
4	RESRVED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2 (SDDS)	GHOST RIDER
3 (DTS)	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 GOLD (DTS)	THE FOUNTAIN
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	THE HOLIDAY
6 GOLD (SDDS)	GHOST RIDER
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	MUSIC & LYRICS
8	APOCALYPTO / HANNIBAL RISING
9	THE MESSENGERS
10	THE PROMISE

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY)	THE PROMISE
2 (DOLBY)	GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY)	MUSIC & LYRICS
4 (DOLBY)	RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY)	APOCALYPTO
2	GHOST RIDER
3	THE PROMISE
4	MUSIC & LYRICS
5	TROIKA

THE MARKETPLACE
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1	THE PROMISE
2	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
3	TROIKA
4	APOCALYPTO/NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	THE PROMISE
2	GHOST RIDER
3	TROIKA

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1	GHOST RIDER
2	KAMASUTRA-3

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	MUSIC & LYRICS
2	GHOST RIDER
3 (DTS EX)	THE PROMISE
4	THE HOLIDAY

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	THE PROMISE
2	ERAGON

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1 (DOLBY)	EPIC MOVIE
2 (DOLBY)	GHOST RIDER
3 (DOLBY)	THE NUMBER 23
4 (DOLBY)	BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	APOCALYPTO
2 (DTS)	THE PROMISE
3 (DOLBY)	GHOST RIDER
4	

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146

1	RESERVED
2 (DOLBY)	RESERVED
3 (DTS)	RESERVED
4	RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2	THE PROMISE
3 (DOLBY)	BLOOD DIAMOND

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	THE PROMISE
2	BLOOD CHOCOLATE
3	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
4	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM/DECK THE HALLS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1	GHOST RIDER
2	THE PROMISE
3 (DOLBY)	APOCALYPTO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736

1	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2	THE PROMISE

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1	LITTLE CHILDREN
2	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS)	TROIKA
2	ROOM SERVICE
3	KISKISAN
4 (DTS)	APOCALYPTO

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	APOCALYPTO
2	TATLONG BARAHA
3 (DTS)	THE PROMISE
4	PARAISO
5	GHOST RIDER

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	CURSE OF THE GOLDEN FLOWER
2	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3	HANNIBAL RISING
4	THE PROMISE

Berma Cinema
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2	TUKSO SI CHARITO

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BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA

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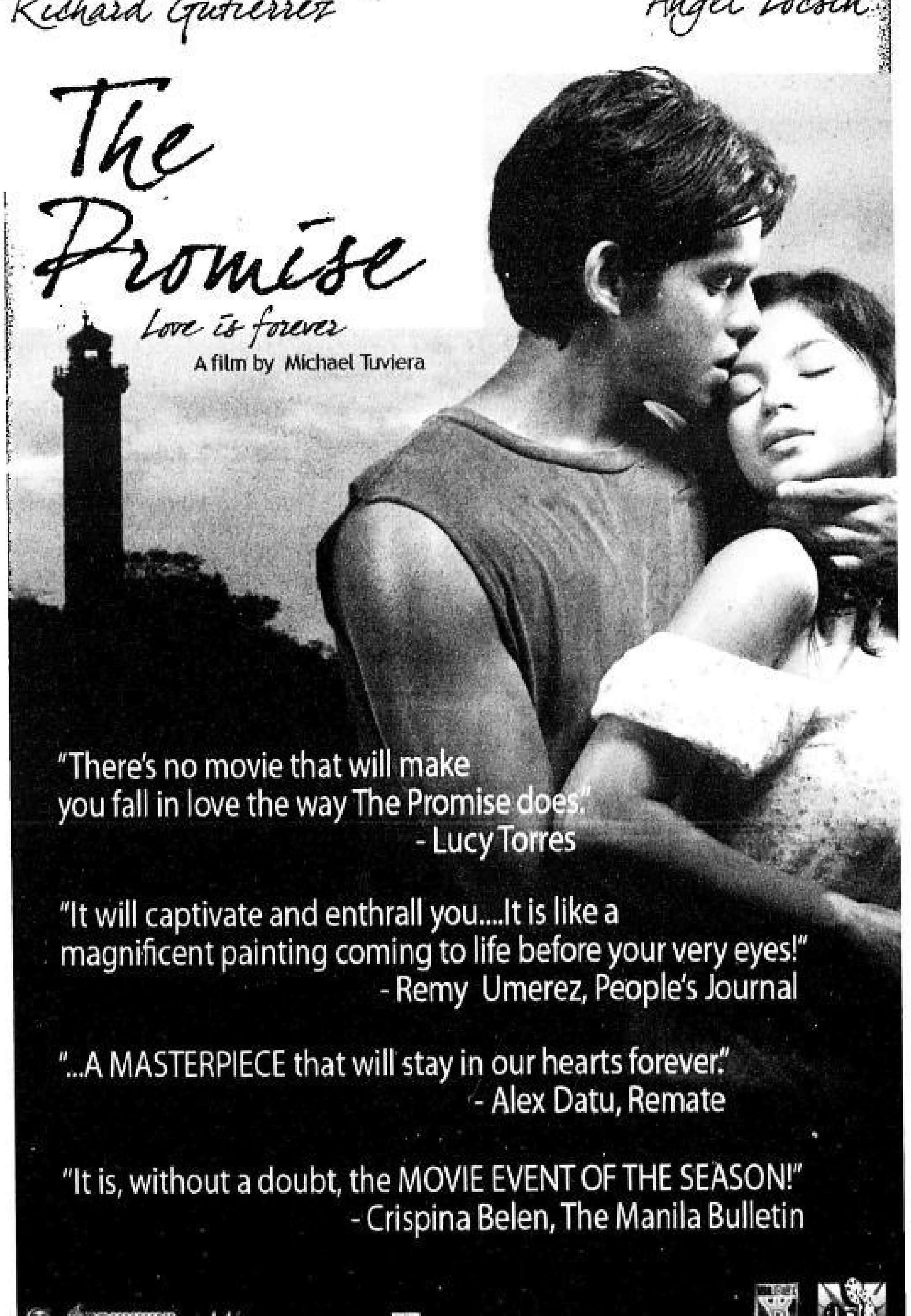
CERTIFIED BLOCKBUSTER!!!

Richard Gutierrez Angel Locsin



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- Lucy Torres

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- Remy Umerez, People's Journal

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Flight . . .

From page E6

After that, the flight's chief stewardess confronted Robertson and ordered her to spend the rest of the flight in economy class.

At the end of the flight, Fiennes and Robertson exchanged phone numbers, and Fiennes called her once they both got back to their respective hotel rooms.

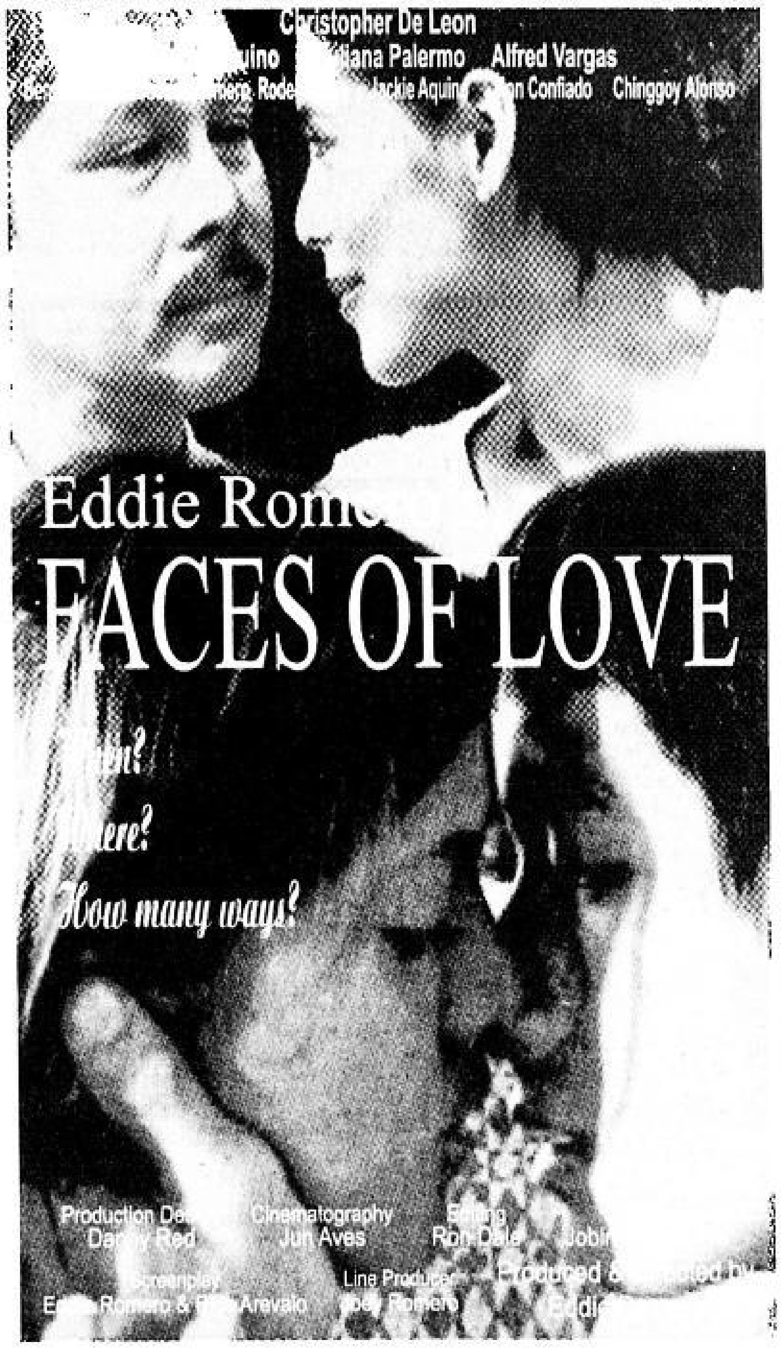
The actor asked her to come by his room, and he bought her dinner that evening and they had sex several more times, according to Robertson.

Robertson told the Mirror that after their encounter in Fiennes' hotel room, she was going to be in Mumbai for two more days and hoped that the actor would call again, "but when he didn't call, I realized he was never going to call," Robertson said.

The air hostess called Fiennes again five days after their fling, asking for his help for her to hold on to her job, but according to Robertson, "it was clear he was just turning his back on me."

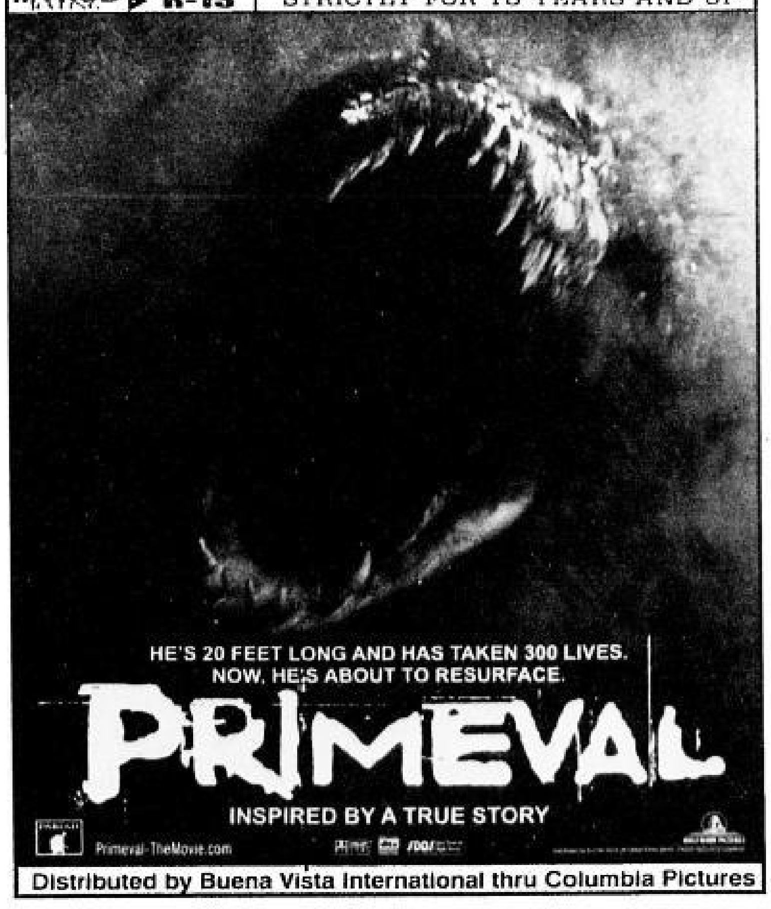
"I told him I was in a lot of trouble … I told him there were people who had seen us leaving the toilet, but all he said was, 'Nothing happened.'" *AFP*

NOW SHOWING PG 13 MTRCB



TERROR BEGINS FEBRUARY 28

MTRCB ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS AND UP



HE'S 20 FEET LONG AND HAS TAKEN 300 LIVES.
NOW, HE'S ABOUT TO RESURFACE.

PRIMEVAL

INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

OPENING TODAY

From page E6

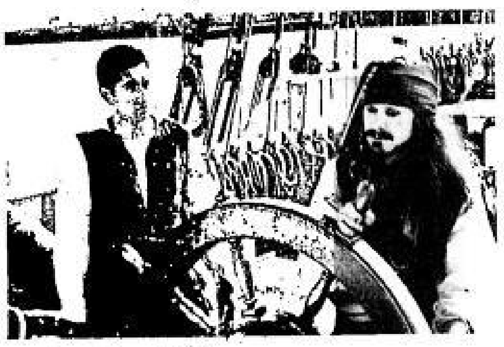
but leave more questions asked than answered." Josh Tyler of CinemaBlend.com concurs: "The big surprise finale is blown long before we get to it ... The only ones who don't seem to have it figured out are the characters running around onscreen."

Bridge to Terabithia

Stars Josh Hutcherson, Anna Sophia Robb, Zooey Deschanel, Robert Patrick

Directed by Gabor Csupo

Based on Katherine Paterson's 1977 Newberry award-winning novel, this film features two small-town fifth-graders who escape to an enchanted forest inhabited by dragonfly warriors and other fanciful creatures. Alex Chun of Los Angeles Times observes: "Thankfully, [the] first-time director keeps the CG effects to a minimum and allows the source material to shine through." Melinda Ennis of Atlanta Journal-Constitution thinks the "young actors, not the special effects, create magic ... the [kids'] relationship is the movie's saving grace." Susan Walker of Toronto Star complains: "the producers give only glimpses of the magical kingdom ... It's as if someone cut the animation and special effects budget."



Epic Movie

Stars Kal Penn, Adam Campbell, Jennifer Coolidge, Carmen Electra

Directed by Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer

A spoof of various blockbusters (from "The Chronicles of Narnia" to "The Da Vinci Code"), this comedy focuses on a quartet of over-aged orphans who visit a chocolate factory and an enchanted kingdom called Gnarnia. A.O. Scott of New York Times points out that this "crude, scatological parody ... is a piece of film criticism in its own right. It is irreverent and appreciative." Wesley Morris of Boston Globe rants: "[the directors] are milking a dried-up cow ... willful sloppiness and retrograde gags make [it] an inevitable byproduct of the Internet video era." Jim Ridley of LA Weekly scoffs: "this feeble, fast-buck ... bomb is an amateur-hour game of Spot That Reference."

Kabul Express

Stars John Abraham, Arshad Warsi, Salman Shahid, Linda Arsenio

Directed by Kabir Khan

The first film to be shot in post-Taliban Afghanistan, this "road movie in hell" trails two Indians who are making a documentary on the strife-torn country. David Chute of LA Weekly calls it "a songless, two-hour Bollywood drama ... [but] the story is confined to some standard P.C. comments on cultural stereotyping." Robert Koehler of Variety gasps: "With crude indecision and larky silliness, [this film] at once lamely revives buddy road pics and trivializes global politics." Robert Hanks of The Independent calls it "a peculiarity ... the story is silly, the acting uneven, the film's grasp of reality tenuous." Exclusively at Robinsons Movieworld Galleria.

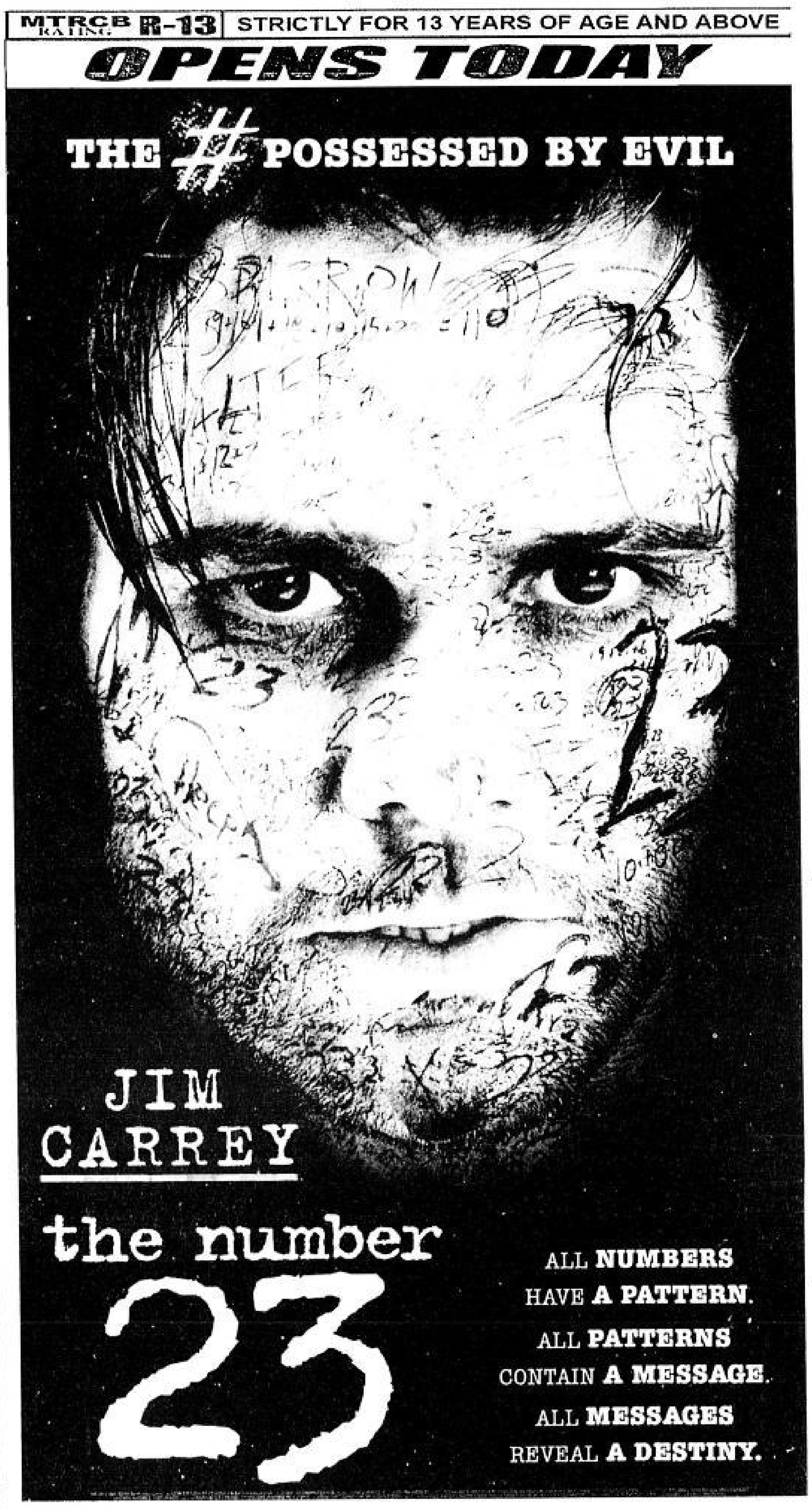
Imahe Nasyon

Stars Ping Medina, Bella Flores, Soliman Cruz, Bodjie Pascua, Pen Medina

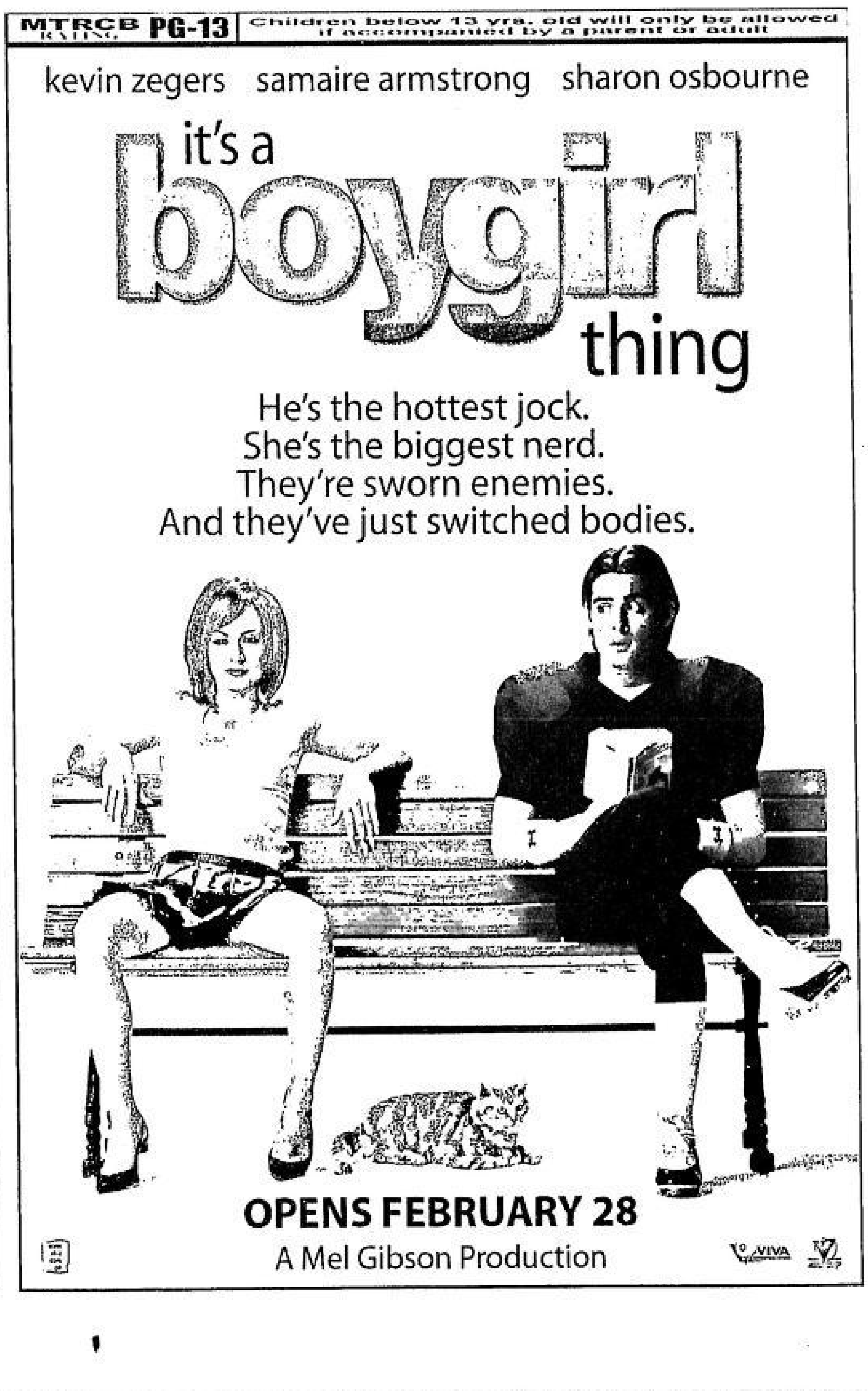
Conceptualized by Jon and Carol Red

Envisioned to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the 1986 Edsa revolution last year, this two-hour "omnibus" film features the five-minute shorts of 20 filmmakers, from Lav Diaz to Roxlee, from Mes de Guzman to Emmanuel de la Cruz. Jon Red admits that this landmark project is "not easy to watch. Here, we shall see the personal vision of each filmmaker." Rica Arevalo of the INQUIRER states that "the endeavor produces mixed results. But, the distinct visions and personal statements of young, innovative filmmakers make all of them winners in our book." Exclusively at IndieSine Robinsons Galleria.

MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
OPENS TODAY
THE # 23 ENIGMA
* 2 divided by 3 is .666---the number of the devil.
* * *
* The number of chromosomes in the human germ line cell is 23.
* * *
* It takes 23 seconds for blood to circulate in the human body.
* * *
* The human biorhythm cycle is 23 days long.
* * *
* The Mayans predicted the world would end on Dec. 23, 2012 (20+1+2=23).
* * *
* The Earth is on a 23.5-degree axis. It means that our entire existence lies on a 23.5 tilt. (5=2+3).
* * *
the number 23


MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
OPENS TODAY
THE # POSSESSED BY EVIL
JIM CARREY
the number 23
ALL NUMBERS HAVE A PATTERN.
ALL PATTERNS CONTAIN A MESSAGE.
ALL MESSAGES REVEAL A DESTINY.

MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE
We Know It's Big.
We Measured.
EPIC MOVIE
GRAND OPENING TODAY


MTRCB RATING PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
kevin zegers samaire armstrong sharon osbourne
it's a boygirl thing
He's the hottest jock.
She's the biggest nerd.
They're sworn enemies.
And they've just switched bodies.
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A Mel Gibson Production
VIVA

Delightful plot premise

VIEWFINDER

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THE HOLLYWOOD FILM "A NIGHT AT the Museum" has a delightful plot premise: A guard at a natural science museum discovers that, when its doors are closed for the day, its exhibits come to life—and party!

At first, the night guard (Ben Stiller) has a horrible time, because the exhibit figures don't so much party as fight with each other. Imagine a group of cowboys squabbling with a Roman legion? Weird!

But also a whole lot of fun, as they're joined by a T-Rex skeleton that wants to play fetch, a long-dormant Pharaoh come to life, Teddy Roosevelt (Robin Williams) falling in love with a beautiful Indian pathfinder, etc.!

Aided by a lot of digital-animation magic, the film starts off as a lively lark. Unfortunately, its sequence of events become predictable after a while, and the production simmers down to being a sequence of "and then... and then... and then" incidents.

Another plotting problem is the use of three old guards as the story's villains. The "danger" the old fogeys whip up isn't all that daunting, so Stiller's character is left with no truly threatening force to oppose, foil and triumph over.

Still, much of the movie's digital magic is fun, and Stiller and Williams give their roles everything they've got.

For the record, the reason all those stuffed animals and wax figures come to life is the activation of the Pharaoh's all-powerful ancient tablet. *How* the tablet works isn't explained, however, and neither is the fact that the Pharaoh himself remains inert even after the other museum figures spring to life.

Also rather tenuous is Stiller's reason for continuing to work in the museum despite his traumatic first night there: He wants to impress his son, who now lives with Stiller's ex-wife and her dashing new husband. Surely, the guard could have thought of a less stressful way to retain his son's respect?

Despite these weak elements, however, "A Night at the Museum" remains a fun view, adding yet another likeable hit to Stiller's filmography.

In fact, it's turning out to be one of his most popular movies to date, assuring the continuing ascendancy of the ace screen comic's career trajectory.

New film for Jolina

Her TV career is flying high, but for months now we've been after Jolina Magdangal to light a fire under her less than eventful movie career. Well, things are finally heating up, because Jolina is currently shooting a movie, "Ouija," with Judy Ann Santos for GMA Films.

We believe that Jolina would do best in a comedy musical, but even a spooky movie is okay, as long as it makes her visible again on the big screen. There's nothing like a film to make a performer's career look significant.

Of course, Jolina will have to contend with the fact that Judy Ann's own movie career is flying even higher, especially after her recent hit, "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo."

Jolina will have to work hard to match her co-star's psychological advantage in this regard. But, with a level playing field, Jolina will be able to come up with another standout performance to complement the more practiced Judy Ann's own portrayal in their new co-starrer.

In a vehicle like this, it simply won't do if one star runs circles around the other.

'The Inheritance of Loss'

A standout read at Powerbooks is Kiran Desai's novel, "The Inheritance of Loss," set in northeast India. Its action unfolds on the cusp of the Nepalese movement for an independent state.

The surge of unrest disturbs the regions and threatens the lives of some of the novel's characters. It also threatens the fledgling romance between 16-year-old Sal and her Nepales tutor, Gym.

As these and other characters struggle with cultural identity and the force of modernization, they strive to maintain an emotional connection with each other.

Desai skillfully moves between first and third world, clarifying the ambiguities of post-colonialism, the pain of exile, and the yearning for a "better" life, when one person's wealth might mean another's poverty.

Bacharach album

Sixteen Burt Bacharach songs are showcased in the unique musical anthology, "In Love with Bacharach." The bossa nova/easy listening album includes "The Look of Love," "Walk on By," "Alfie," "Close to You," "I Say a Little Prayer" and many more!

Flight attendant gives Ralph Fiennes a '10 out of 10' in mile-high sex

LONDON—BRITISH ACTOR RALPH FIENNES was a "10 out of 10," the Australian flight attendant who had sex with him on a flight to India said in an interview with the Sunday Mirror.

But she added that Fiennes turned his back on her in the wake of the scandal.

Qantas stewardess Lisa Robertson, 38, said there was "instant chemistry" between her and Fiennes, and told the tabloid of how they had sex in a business-class toilet cubicle, and again several times in Fiennes' Mumbai hotel room.

..."Ralph Fiennes is gorgeous and the chemistry between us was amazing. What woman wouldn't want to have sex with him? He was the best lover I've ever had—a 10 out of 10," she told the Sunday Mirror.

Robertson said that Fiennes began kissing her in the curtained area where she was taking her break, and as the pair became more passionate, she led him to the toilet cubicle where they had sex.

"I thought if I was going to get the sack, it would be worth it," she said.

"I knew everything was totally against the rules and wrong but I didn't care. I was going for it."

Her account of the encounter on the flight is disputed by Fiennes' publicist, who said Robertson was the "sexual aggressor."

"She initiated the encounter," Sara Keene told the Australian newspaper The Sunday Telegraph. "This woman seduced him on a plane. She was the sexual aggressor."

Robertson said that the pair had unprotected sex in the cubicle, and were found out when a fellow flight attendant noted that after Fiennes left the cubicle, Robertson locked the door again.

FLIGHT/ E4

OPENING TODAY

Faces of Love

Stars Christopher de Leon, Angel Aquino, Alfred Vargas, Juliana Palermo

Directed by Eddie Romero

The National Artist for Film returns to movies with a romantic comedy that revolves around a string of "anonymous love letters." Seiko Films producer Robbie Tan snapped up the chance of distributing Romero's comeback. Graded "A" by the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB), the movie was also endorsed by the Department of Education. The CEB commends its "fast-paced, well-woven script [and] nostalgic music." It's been hailed as "vintage Romero," who collaborated with young digital filmmakers Rica Arevalo (screenplay), Paolo Villaluna (assistant director), Jun Aves (cinematography), Jobin Ballesteros (music) and Ron Dale (editing) in this project.

Dreamgirls

Stars Jamie Foxx, Beyoncé Knowles, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, Jennifer Hudson

Directed by Bill Condon

Based on Michael Bennett's 1981 Broadway hit, this big-screen musical follows the rise of an all-girl trio allegedly inspired by Diana Ross and the Supremes. David Ansen of Newsweek comments that "[it's] conceived in broad, electric strokes; it's both epic in its ambition ... and intimate in calibrating the cost of turning performers into products." David Denby of New Yorker opines that "[it] fulfills the ecstatic promise inherent in all musicals—that life can be dissolved into song and dance." Kirk Honeycutt of The Hollywood Reporter observes: "At the time, Bennett's work was called 'cinematic.' Funnily enough, the movie version feels theatrical."

The Last King of Scotland

Stars Forest Whitaker, James McAvoy, Kerry Washington, Gillian Anderson

Directed by Kevin Macdonald

Based on a 1998 novel by Giles Foden, this bio-pic attempts to shed light on the life of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin (Whitaker), as seen through the eyes of a fictional Scottish doctor (McAvoy). Peter Travers of Rolling Stone says that "powerful, thundering, colossal [are] puny words to describe Whitaker's king-size, Oscar-ready performance ... he's on fire." Ella Taylor of Village Voice describes it as "an adequate thriller redeemed by Whitaker's sensational turn ... he humanizes Amin without excusing his manipulative seductions or appalling brutality." Ruthe Stein of San Francisco Chronicle says the director, "whose previous experience is limited to docus, skillfully brings [the novel] to life." Exclusively at Ayala Malls.

The Number 23

Stars Jim Carrey, Virginia Madsen, Logan Lerman, Danny Huston

Directed by Joel Schumacher

A dog catcher (Carrey) becomes obsessed with an obscure detective novel that, he believes, is based on his life. Soon enough, he is consumed by the urban legend that claims the number 23 is Satanic. Emanuel Levy of Emanuellevy.com dismisses it as "a senseless, incoherent psychological thriller." Ken Lowery of Pop Syndicate.com agrees: "[its] final revelations try to tie it all up with a neat little bow,

OPENING/ E5

WHERE IS TERABITHIA?
IT'S A KINGDOM IN NARNIA!

The name was inspired by a place called Terebinthia, an island in the fictional world of NARNIA, mentioned in both Prince Caspian and The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, novels by C. S. Lewis (The Chronicles of Narnia).

In the Walt Disney film Bridge to Terabithia, the character Leslie makes reference to "The Chronicles of Narnia", where she hands over the stories to her friend Jesse so that he can learn to behave like a king.

Leslie and Jesse, together with the people of Terabithia and the 30-foot Tree Giant.

In 1976, award-winning writer Katherine Paterson was inspired to write "Bridge to Terabithia", following a tragic death of a close friend to her young son David. As a way to help her son deal with his grief at such a tender age, Katherine wrote the novel "Bridge to Terabithia". She had set out to write a series of fantasy tales but ended up with a far more enchanted universe of mythological creatures waging an epic battle between good and evil.

The book was first published in 1977, and won the prestigious Newbery Medal in 1978.

The film was produced by Walden Media, the same producer of THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA .The Special Effects was done by Peter Jackson's WETA Ltd. ("The Lord of the Rings" & "King Kong").

The film opened with a record-breaking gross of $22.1M over the Friday-to-Sunday period (Feb.16-18), Disney's highest President's Day holiday weekend box office take. The fantasy film about a magical wonderland averaged a sturdy $7,032 from 3,139 theaters, and earning strong reviews from film critics.

ADVT.

MTRCB RATING ▶PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
NO. 1 IN THE U.S.
NO. 1 IN THE PHILIPPINES!
They say children see what adults do not.
But no one listens. No one believes.
Now, no one will live.
SAM RAIMI
THE DIRECTOR OF SPIDERMAN 1, 2 & 3
& PRODUCER OF THE GRUDGE SERIES
presents
THE MESSENGERS
NOW SHOWING

ARANETA CENTER

Gateway Alimall FarmersPlaza

THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY — Gateway CINEPLEX*10 — DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

EPIC MOVIE 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:40	NUMBER 23 11:50 / 2:15 / 4:40 / 7:05 / 9:30	FACES OF LOVE 1:35 / 3:35 / 5:35 / 7:35 / 9:35	
ASK THE DUST 1:30 / 4:00 / 6:30 / 9:00	BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA 12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30	GHOST RIDER 12:10 / 2:35 / 5:00 / 7:25 / 9:50	
MUSIC & LYRICS :05 / 3:15 / 5:25 / 7:35 / 9:45	THE PROMISE 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40	THE MESSENGERS 12:00 / 4:45 / 9:30 THE HOLIDAY 1:55 / 6:40	NUMBER 23 1:40 / 4:05 / 6:30 / 8:55

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EPIC MOVIE 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30	GHOST RIDER 1:20 / 3:45 / 6:10 / 8:35	NUMBER 23 1:05 / 3:30 / 5:55 / 8:20
THE PROMISE 12:10 R4 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30	BRIDGE OF TERABITHIA 12:05 R4 / 1:20 / 3:35 / 5:50 / 8:05	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM

PBA CHAMPIONSHIP Feb 21. Wednesday, 7pm - Ginebra VS San Miguel	VINA MORALES "SHOWGIRL" THE REPEAT February 24. Saturday, 8 pm

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box office for the three-day weekend beginning Feb 16

Ghost Rider - Sony Pictures

TW	LW	Title	Gross	WR
1	☆	Ghost Rider	$44.5 mln	1
2	☆	Bridge to Terabithia	$22.1 mln	1
3	1	Norbit	$16.8 mln	2
4	☆	Music and Lyrics	$14.0 mln	1
5	☆	Daddy's Little Girls	$12.1 mln	1
6	☆	Breach	$10.4 mln	1
7	2	Hannibal Rising	$5.5 mln	2
8	3	Because I Said So	$5.0 mln	3
8	4	The Messengers	$3.8 mln	3
10	5	Night at the Museum	$3.7 mln	9

This Week, Last Week *Weeks in Release*

☆ *New release*

Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

REUTERS